BROKEN DISHES

By MARTIN FLAVIN

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BROKEN DISHES

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

MARTIN FLAVIN

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NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
INCORPORATED 1898
25 WEST 45TH STREET

LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.
26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET
STRAND, W.C.2

812.5
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Printed in the United States of America by
THE RICHMOND HILL RECORD, RICHMOND HILL, N. Y.

The following is a copy of program of the first performance of "BROKEN DISHES" as presented at the Ritz Theatre, New York, N. Y., November 5, 1929:

MARION GERING
(By arrangement with Oscar Serlin)

Presents

"BROKEN DISHES"

A Comedy by

MARTIN FLAVIN

Author of "The Criminal Code"

With

DONALD MEEK

Setting by Eddie Eddy
Staged by Mr. Gering

THE CAST
(As they first speak)

JENNY BUMPSTED ..... *Eda Heinemann*
MYRA BUMPSTED ..... *Ellen E. Lowe*
MABEL BUMPSTED ..... *Etha Dack*
ELAINE BUMPSTED ..... *Bette Davis*
CYRUS BUMPSTED ..... *Donald Meek*
BILL CLARK ..... *Reed Brown, Jr.*
SAM GREEN ..... *Art. Smith*
REV. DR. STUMP ..... *J. Francis-Robertson*
A STRANGER ..... *Duncan Penwarden*
GRANT ..... *Josef Lazarovici*

The action of the play, which is divided into three acts, takes place between seven and eleven o'clock on a winter evening in the Bumpsted home, in a small mid-western town.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

JENNY, *the wife of* CYRUS *and the mother of the three girls, is large and severe and capable.*

MYRA *is thirty, hatched-faced, sour, homely.*

MABEL *is twenty-six, fat, placid, dull-looking.*

ELAINE, *the prize of the family, is a sweet, pretty girl of twenty.*

CYRUS *is a mild, inoffensive, cheerful, neat-looking little man, with a soft and pleasant voice and an embarrassed manner. When he is ill at ease he rubs his hands; when he is troubled he cracks his finger joints. Thirty years of clerking in Bascom's store and thirty years of* JENNY'S *ceaseless plaint have failed to kill a little twinkle in his eye. His black store suit is ever so neat, but shiny in spots from long, hard wear.*

BILL CLARK *is a tall, strapping, clean, wholesome-looking country boy. His hands and feet are undeniably large and he is not over deft at handling them. But he is in no sense and by no stretch of the imagination a "clumsy yokel." He is decently if a little stiffly dressed.*

SAM GREEN *is a chubby, white-haired, red-faced little old man in a huge ulster. He has a constant chip on his shoulder but his bark is much worse than his bite.*

REVEREND DR. STUMP *is a tall, lank, birdlike-looking man with a chirping voice and a disposition to beam. He is very near-sighted and as deaf as a post.*

STRANGER *is a tall, broad-shouldered man with black moustache. His coat is rich, the collar of fine fur. Kid gloves conceal a diamond on his hand. Politely he takes off his hat and lo! his hair is black and curly. A man of doubtful age becoming just a little plump, of polished manner, easy and confident. His voice is pleasant, deep and suave. You recognize him instantly. No other man could look like* CHESTER ARMSTRONG.

QUINN: *Now,* CHESTER ARMSTRONG *was a big man, but this man is a giant. The crown of his black slouch hat brushes the framing of the door; the shoulders of his woolly ulster span it from side to side. His hands are mittened; they look like hams hung up to cure. He wears galoshes which resemble boats. His face is round like a moon, red with the cold, and decorated with black earmuffs. He is short of breath and wheezy as to voice, which has a hint of brogue.*

BROKEN DISHES

ACT I

SCENE: *The Bumpsted Living-room.*

The door to the kitchen is down stage right. Above it is the stairs. The stairs are reached by two steps against the rear wall, so that the actors, walking upstairs, are facing the audience as they go. The rear wall rakes downstage toward stage left. There is a small window in the right corner over the stairs. The front door is center. Left of the front door is the organ; to the left of this is a bay window with window-seat. To the left of this is a fireplace; to the left of the fireplace in the corner is a whatnot. The short left wall is entirely taken up with the door leading to the parlor. There is an armchair down left, facing the fire, and a sofa left center between the fireplace and the front door. The round kitchen table with five chairs is down right, near the kitchen door and just a little right from center. On the right wall, between the kitchen door and the stair landing, is a sideboard.

It is half-past six of a winter evening. There is snow on the ground and frost on the window-panes, and a small fire of coals on the hearth. The Bumpsted women are at supper.

At the head of the table is JENNY, *the mother of the three girls. On her right are* MYRA *and* MABEL. *On the opposite side of the table is* ELAINE. *At the end of the table, facing* JENNY, *is the vacant armchair of the master of the house.*

When the Curtain rises, the meal is nearing its conclusion. JENNY *pours her tea; then father's.* MYRA *stirs tea loudly.* MABEL *alone is still quite busy with her plate.*

Clock set at six thirty-two.

(LIGHTS No. 1.)

JENNY. *(Passing a cup to* ELAINE*)* Here's your father's tea.

ELAINE. *(Mildly)* It will only get cold, Mother.

JENNY. *(Irascibly)* I don't care if it does. If he wants his tea hot he can come home to supper at the proper time.

ELAINE. *(Putting down the cup at her father's place with a sigh)* I suppose Mr. Bascom kept him at the store.

JENNY. If he had any backbone he wouldn't be kept. He's clerked in Bascom's store for thirty years and I should expect he could come home to his supper at a reasonable hour if he wanted to.

ELAINE. It isn't very late.

JENNY. It's half-past six and I told him at noon we were going to have supper at six o'clock.

MYRA. *(Has a prim manner and a thin voice)* Yes, you did, Mother. I heard you.

JENNY. I told him to be sharp because we were going to the Crystal to-night to see that picture. Dear knows it's seldom enough we go anywhere.

MABEL. *(Languid but offensive)* Elaine always sides with Father.

ELAINE. *(Bridling)* I do not.

JENNY. You do so. I don't know what's got into you lately, you're that strong-headed. *(To* MYRA*)* Myra, I wish you'd fill the teapot. (MYRA *goes out* R. *with a deep sigh.)*

MABEL. *(With mouth full)* Father is always late.

JENNY. Yes, he is, and he always was. He was late to his own wedding, but—*(She sighs)*—he finally did get there, more's the pity.

ELAINE. Father is just father.

JENNY. (MYRA *returns* R.) Yes, and that's just the trouble with him. If he'd been a man like Chester Armstrong, I guess my life would have been a very different one.

MYRA. *(Putting down the teapot)* Where do you suppose he is now—Mother?

JENNY. I heard once he was president of a railroad or a bank in New York City. I disremember which.

MYRA. *(Ecstatically)* Think of that!

JENNY. That wouldn't be anything for Chet Armstrong. *(She coquettes for an instant with her memories)* You know I always called him "Chet."

MYRA. Yes, I know, Mother. *(Like many emaciated spinsters,* MYRA *has a voracious appetite for romance, and she adores this second-hand and threadbare adventure of her mother's youth.* MABEL *is frankly bored.* ELAINE *is thoughtful.)*

JENNY. You could tell just to look at that man that he'd amount to something. He stood over six feet in his stockings, Myra, and he had such fine broad shoulders. His hair was black and curly and he had a black moustache, and he wore the best looking clothes I ever saw on any man.

MYRA. And a silk hat, didn't he, Mother?

JENNY. Yes, he did. City men used to wear them in those days. I tell you when he came to Cassopolis all the girls were a-fluttering. *(She sighs reminis-*

cently.) But he never seemed to care about any of them except me.

ELAINE. Well, he wasn't rich then, was he?

JENNY. Indeed he was.

MABEL. Pass the butter, please. (ELAINE *passes butter.)*

JENNY. He used to say to me: "Little girl——" (ELAINE *looks at mother, surprised.* JENNY *gives both a sharp look)* I was right small then, about your size, Elaine. "Little girl," he'd say, "I'm only waiting for you to give the word and I'll carry you off to fairyland."

MYRA. My! But weren't you thrilled?

JENNY. Well, I was—some. He talked about a brown-stone house in the city and three servants at least, and a carriage and team, and a summer place, too. I forget just where. And he said if I'd marry him we'd go to Paris on our honeymoon.

MYRA. *(Leaning forward)* Paris! Think of it.

MABEL. *(To* MYRA*)* Another biscuit, please. (JENNY *gives* MABEL *a sharp look.* MYRA *passes biscuit; plates bang.)*

MABEL. I'm sorry.

ELAINE. *(Half to herself)* I never heard about that before.

JENNY. *(Sharply)* What's that?

ELAINE. *(A trifle confused)* I was just thinking —I mean—I—I never heard you tell about a honeymoon in Paris——

JENNY. *(Testily)* No? Well, there's a good and plenty of other things you haven't heard, too.

MYRA. Had he ever been in Paris, Mother?

JENNY. He'd lived there. Why, he knew Paris just like you know this town, and my how he could talk the language!

MYRA. What a chance you had, Mother!

JENNY. Yes, I did. (MABEL *reaches for jam near* ELAINE; ELAINE *tries to help her. She sighs)* And

it's no wonder it kind of spoiled me for things. I've had to slave and stint and scrimp all my life. Your father's never made a decent living and he never will, and when I think—— *(She sighs again.)*

ELAINE. I don't think we live so badly, Mother.

JENNY. Well, it's no credit to your father if we don't. If it wasn't for what Myra and Mabel make teaching school, and what I've learned to manage with——

MYRA. That's right, Mother.

MABEL. Another cup of tea, please. *(Hands her cup to mother.)*

JENNY. *(Pouring tea)* You mark my words, Elaine—— *(Hands tea to* MABEL.*)* You mark my words, there's no worse mistake a girl can make than to marry a man who can't get along. (MABEL *puts five sugars in tea.)*

ELAINE. But how can you tell whether they're going to get along or not, Mother?

JENNY. Pick out one that's already got along.

ELAINE. That isn't such an easy thing to do in a small town.

JENNY. It's easier than what you'll have to do if you make a mistake, let me tell you. I hope I've raised my girls to have common sense. I've tried to hard enough. I guess you know that, Elaine.

ELAINE. *(Wearily)* Yes, Mother.

JENNY. If I hadn't forbidden you going around with Bill Clark, I——

ELAINE. I don't see why you're so hard on Bill, Mother.

JENNY. Don't you? Well, I'll not waste any more time explaining.

MYRA. As far as I'm concerned, I wouldn't look at a man unless he could support me properly.

JENNY. I should hope not!

ELAINE. But, Mother——

JENNY. Now, that's enough, Elaine. I guess I know what's best for my children.

MABEL. Is there any dessert?

JENNY. There's some canned peaches and some cake. You get them, Elaine. (MYRA *holds up cup;* JENNY *pours tea.)*

ELAINE. Yes, Mother. *(She gets up from the table, turns back at* L. *of father's chair and picks up her father's plate; crosses to kitchen door.)*

JENNY. *(Sharply)* What you doing with that plate?

ELAINE. I was going to keep his supper warm.

JENNY. Put it down!

ELAINE. But it's stone cold now!

JENNY. So much the better.

MYRA. Just look what time it is, Mother? We're going to be late for the show if we don't hurry.

JENNY. Well, girls, let's get the dishes done.

MABEL. Don't I get my dessert?

JENNY. You can eat it in the kitchen. (JENNY *rises)* Myra, you put the hot water on for the dishes. Elaine—(MYRA *exits)*—you scrape them. (JENNY *exits* R.*)*

(KNOCK Off C.*)*

ELAINE. *(Crosses to window; then crosses to kitchen door)* I'll bring the dishes in a minute, Mother! *(Closes door. Crosses to door* C.*, opens it and lets in* BILL*, dressed in coat, cap, mittens, muffler; very cold.)*

BILL. I've been waiting for you out by the gate.

ELAINE. Yes, I know. Father's late for supper and Mother's in a temper. I don't want her to see you here.

BILL. But, Elaine——

ELAINE. I don't see how I can get out.

BILL. But we had a date.

ELAINE. Mother wants me to go to the movies—she'll suspect something.

BILL. I think I ought to have it out with her.

ELAINE. It's no use—it wouldn't do any good.

BILL. Maybe not, but things can't go on this way —sneakin' in and out as though we had something to be ashamed of.

ELAINE. I know, dear—I hate it, too.

BILL. I hardly ever get a chance to see you——

ELAINE. I'll try to think of something.

BILL. Why don't you let me talk to her right now?

ELAINE. It would only make things worse.

BILL. I don't see how they could be worse, Elaine.

JENNY. *(Off stage* R.*)* Elaine!

ELAINE. Go quickly, Bill, please. I'll try to get out of going to the movies. You come back a little later.

BILL. All right, honey. *(Exits* C.*)*

JENNY. *(Entering* R.*)* Elaine?

ELAINE. Yes?

JENNY. Haven't you got those dishes scraped yet?

ELAINE. I'm just starting now.

JENNY. What have you been doing?

ELAINE. I—nothing.

MYRA. *(Coming in* R.*; to* U.R. *of table)* We're going to be late, Mother.

JENNY. *(Crosses* C. *front of table)* I know that well enough. Come, Elaine, be quick.

ELAINE. *(Hesitating;* L. *of table. Lamely)* I—I don't care about the picture.

JENNY. *(Regarding her suspiciously)* Oh, you don't! Well, you're going anyway.

ELAINE. *(A little wildly)* I don't see why I have to do what I don't want to. *(And she goes into the kitchen* R. *just as* MABEL *comes in with a slab of cake in her hand.)*

JENNY. I can't think what's got into her lately, she's that contrary. (JENNY *stands chair* L. *of table;*

MYRA *stands* U.R. *corner of table;* MABEL *sits* D.R. *chair of table.)*

MABEL. *(Placidly)* I know. (MYRA *stands* U.R. *of table, fixing dishes.)*

JENNY. What do you mean, Mabel?

MABEL. *(Eats; pause; finishing eating, then)* It's Bill Clark's influence.

JENNY. *(Amazed and outraged)* Bill Clark! *(Sits chair* L. *of table)* You don't mean to say she's had anything to do with that fellow since I forbade it? (MABEL *nods.)* Well, I never—— *(Looks at* MYRA *for confirmation.)*

MYRA. *(Lowering her voice; leaning forward)* She does go around with him, Mother. *(Back.)*

MABEL. *(Leaning forward)* Of course she does. *(Back.)*

JENNY. I can't believe it.

MYRA. *(Forward)* Some of the girls have seen them together. *(Back.)*

MABEL. *(Forward)* Oh, everybody in town knows it! *(Back; stirs tea.)*

MYRA. I don't see how she can. He has such big hands and feet. Ugh! *(And she shudders daintily.)*

(LIGHTS No. 2.)

MABEL. *(Switches on lights)* He's just a clumsy yokel. (GIRLS *nod.)*

JENNY. Well, I declare to goodness—— *(Ominously)* Elaine!

ELAINE. *(Off stage)* Yes, Mother?

JENNY. Come in here. (ELAINE *enters* R. *to* D.R.) I understand you've been going around with Bill Clark again.

ELAINE. *(Looks at* MABEL—*runs finger of left hand over edge of chair. Helplessly)* Well—I—— *(Looks angrily at* MYRA *and* MABEL.*)*

JENNY. Didn't I forbid you to have anything to do with him? (ELAINE *says nothing.)* The very idea—a girl of mine being such a fool. I don't know

what you're thinking about. Haven't you got any pride? Any self-respect?

ELAINE. Yes, Mother.

JENNY. Well, why don't you show it, then? (ELAINE *stares at her plate.)* Haven't you got a living example in front of you of what it means to throw yourself away? Do you want to have the kind of experience I've had?

ELAINE. Would you rather have taught school all your life, Mother? (MABEL *about to eat a bit of peach; drops spoon into dish.)*

JENNY. What's that to do with it? I don't care how soon you get married if you get a husband that can take care of you decently. But I won't have you making a fool of yourself like I did. *(Sniffs viciously)* Bill Clark! The very idea!

MYRA. *(Sneering)* A delivery boy for Bascom's store.

ELAINE. *(Defiantly)* Everybody has to start somewhere.

JENNY. Yes, and most of them stop there just like your father did.

MABEL. *(Eats peaches; languidly)* I wouldn't be seen on the street with him.

ELAINE. You might do worse, Mabel.

MABEL. I'd see myself.

ELAINE. *(Sweetly; touches* MABEL *with one finger)* Well, anyway, you haven't done any better.

MABEL. *(Outraged)* Oh! I'll tell you——

JENNY. *(Dangerously)* Mabel! That's enough now.

MABEL. *(Whimpering)* She needn't say a catty thing like that. *(Turns in chair to* ELAINE*)* If I'd wanted to marry a bumpkin like Bill Clark I could have been married a dozen times over.

MYRA. *(Sits chair* L.R. *of table)* Of course; so could I, so could any girl.

ELAINE. *(Crosses to between* MABEL *and* MYRA*)*

Well, if you're both waiting for Chester Armstrongs you may wait a good while.

JENNY. *(Grimly)* And they might do worse things than wait.

ELAINE. *(Mumbling)* They're jealous, that's all.

JENNY. Elaine!

MABEL. *(Flushes and laughs)* Jealous?

MYRA. The very idea! Te-he! *(She giggles unconvincingly.)*

ELAINE. Oh, you can laugh, but—

JENNY. Elaine! (ELAINE *turns away.)* Not another word. I'm ashamed of you.

ELAINE. *(Muttering)* Well, they are——

(ALL *top each other)*

JENNY. You stop now! I've heard enough! *(Pause.* JENNY *looks at* ELAINE*)* I don't want to hear Bill Clark's name mentioned again in this house. He's not to come here and you're not to see him anywhere. Do you understand?

ELAINE. *(With her eyes on her plate)* Yes.

(The door opens and CYRUS *bustles into the room in a tremendous hurry.* ELAINE *jumps up quickly.* JENNY *gives* ELAINE *a sharp look.* ELAINE *kisses him, and helps him off with his coat at* U.C. ELAINE *places coat and cap on window-seat. The others apply themselves to the peaches and cake.* MYRA *sits in Mother's chair* U.R. *of table.)*

CYRUS. *(At a great rate from the moment he opens the door)* Well, well! I'm late now, ain't I? Yes, sir. That's too bad. Bless you, Elly! Don't bother about me. Just let me get out of this ulster. I tell you what, a fellow needs a coat like that to-night. Yes, siree. . . . *(He strips off his cap and mittens)*

I won't be a minute now. Just let me give my hands a rinse. Yep, that's it. *(Hurries toward kitchen door)* Don't wait for me, Jenny. Go right ahead, all of you. I'll be right there in a jiffy. *(And he darts into kitchen* R.*)*

JENNY. Finish the dishes, girls. (JENNY *crosses up; turns on chandelier; then crosses front of sofa; turns on* L. *brackets; then crosses back to above table* C. MABEL *places chair in front to* D.R., *against wall;* MYRA *puts hers against wall* R. *at* C. MABEL *crosses around* U. *of table to its* L. ELAINE *to front of table; sets father's place* R. *of table. For a few moments there is only the sound of china and silver)* And throw that cider out and wash the jug.

ELAINE. Yes, Mother.

CYRUS. *(Hurrying back, rubbing his hands furiously)* By gracious! It's cold out to-night! I wouldn't wonder'n it'd be below zero before morning. It just gets into a man's bones. Yes, sir, that's right, it does. *(Looks at clock on mantel)* Shucks! Now I am late, ain't I? Dog take it, Jenny, I'm mighty sorry. (JENNY *sniffs.)* I wouldn't believe it could be so late. But there it is. Ha—ha! *(Sits on chair* R. *of table,* MABEL'S *place.* MABEL *goes into kitchen.)* You can't fool the old clock, no, sir. Shucks! I am sorry, Jenny, I really am.

JENNY. I told you at noon we were going to have supper at six o'clock to-night. (MYRA *goes into kitchen.)*

CYRUS. Yes, you did, Jenny. That's right. I didn't forget it. *(He begins to eat in great haste.)*

ELAINE. Is your tea cold, Father?

CYRUS. No, siree, it's just fine. (JENNY *gives* ELAINE *a dark look. Then* ELAINE *exits to kitchen.)* I tell you what: it puts life in a man to come home to a fine supper like this. After all, there's no place like home.

JENNY. 'Tisn't often we go to a picture show. I

should think you could have managed to get home so as we could get cleaned up in time to get decent seats.

CYRUS. *(Salting food through speech unconsciously)* I'm mighty sorry, but I just couldn't help it. *(*JENNY *sniffs.)* I was just fixing to close up when old Mrs. Hornblower come in. She had a piece of taffeta to match and you know how she is, Jenny.

JENNY. Humph!

CYRUS. Shucks! I think I pulled down every bolt of silk in the store and then she couldn't find what she wanted.

JENNY. You could have told her to come back tomorrow.

CYRUS. Oh, no! Now, Jenny, I couldn't do that, could I?

JENNY. That's what Chester Armstrong would have done if I'd been waiting for him.

CYRUS. Yes, I guess that's right. I guess he would. *(He sighs.* MYRA *and* MABEL *return to* U.R. *of the table.* MYRA *on* MABEL'S L. JENNY *rises; to* L. *of her chair.)*

MYRA. We better just leave the dishes stacked. Mother, or we won't get any seats.

JENNY. No, we won't leave them stacked. I won't have dirty dishes left in my house.

MABEL. I should think Father could do them.

CYRUS. That's right. You leave 'em for me. I'll do 'em, Jenny. I'd just as soon as not.

JENNY. *(Grudgingly)* Well, I guess it wouldn't do you any harm.

CYRUS. No, siree, not a bit. I'd like it. I really would.

JENNY. You girls better be getting your things on.

MYRA. Yes, Mother. *(She and* MABEL *start for stairs.)*

JENNY. Myra, you bring my hat and coat down when you come.

MYRA. Yes, Mother. *(They go out upstairs.)*

JENNY. *(Sits on her chair. Ominously)* Cyrus!

CYRUS. *(Vaguely alarmed—moving dishes away)* Yes, Jenny?

JENNY. Elaine's been going around again with that Bill Clark.

CYRUS. My gracious! You don't say?

JENNY. I do say, and it's got to be stopped.

CYRUS. *(Helplessly)* Well—well—— *(He cracks his finger joints.)*

JENNY. I won't have her making a fool of herself like some folks have.

CYRUS. No, of course, Jenny, that's right, but—well—he—he—— *(He stammers.)*

JENNY. But what?

CYRUS. Well, I was just going to say, Jenny, he—that is, Bill—— *(He hesitates.)*

JENNY. Yes, what?

CYRUS. *(Very mildly)* Well, he ain't a bad sort of boy, Jenny.

JENNY. *(Menacingly)* I suppose you have been encouraging this thing.

CYRUS. Now, now, Jenny, you know I wouldn't do anything like that. Bless you, you know that, Jenny. Shucks! I only just said——

JENNY. I know what you said. You think Bill Clark's a proper match for your daughter, do you?

CYRUS. Well—I——

JENNY. Well, I expect he is, for your daughter, but not for mine. I've kept two of my girls from making fools of themselves and I won't have Elaine throwing herself away on a delivery boy.

CYRUS. I expect Mr. Bascom will promote Bill to be a clerk pretty soon.

JENNY. And that's a fine thing to look forward to, isn't it?

CYRUS. Well—— *(He sighs)* Shucks! I guess that's right, Jenny. It ain't much, is it?

JENNY. No, it ain't, and no one should know it better than I do.

CYRUS. I guess that's right, Jenny. *(And he sighs again.)*

JENNY. I want you to tell Bill Clark to stay away from Elaine.

CYRUS. *(Horrified)* Me?

JENNY. Yes, you. I suppose you've got backbone enough to do that, haven't you?

CYRUS. Well, I——

JENNY. 'Twouldn't have taken Chester Armstrong long to do it.

CYRUS. *(Meditating wearily)* Yes, I expect he'd have been pretty good at that, Jenny. *(He ponders)* Well, all right. Only—I——

JENNY. Only what?

CYRUS. *(Hastily)* Nothing, Jenny. Of course you know best.

(KNOCK.)

JENNY. Humph! I should think I did. *(There is a knock at door.)*

CYRUS. *(Calls)* Come in!

BILL. *(Enters* C. *At* L. *of door* U.C., *twisting his cap)* Oh! *(Is in fact extremely nervous.* JENNY *strums fingers left hand on other hand.)*

CYRUS. *(With great cordiality)* Well, well, if it isn't Bill! How are you, Bill? *(Starts to get up)* Lay off your coat. Take a chair.

BILL. Evening, Mrs. Bumpsted.

JENNY. *(Stops strumming. Frigidly)* You better go on with your supper, Cyrus.

CYRUS. *(Hastily)* By Jinks! I guess that's right. *(Sits down again)* I'm pretty late to-night.

BILL. *(Crosses* D.C.*)* Don't bother about me, Mr. Bumpsted.

CYRUS. Getting pretty cold out, Bill, ain't it?

BILL. Yes, sir.

CYRUS. Wouldn't wonder if it'd get down to zero to-night.

JENNY. You better eat your supper, Cyrus.

CYRUS. Yes, Jenny, yes, I will. *(And he bends over his plate.)*

BILL. I'm sorry I came so early, Mrs. Bumpsted. I thought—— *(He hesitates. She stares at him stonily. Pause.)* I just wanted to have a little talk with Elaine—— *(He hesitates.)*

JENNY. I see. *(She looks particularly imposing, and sounds particularly hard.)*

BILL. *(Starts for door)* I can come back later if it ain't convenient now.

JENNY. What have you to say to Elaine?

BILL. Why—nothing—Mrs. Bumpsted.

JENNY. I thought I told you before I didn't want you to see Elaine.

BILL. Yes, ma'm—you did—— *(Crosses* D.C.*)* I'd like to know what you got against me, Mrs. Bumpsted!

JENNY. *(Turns, faces* BILL*)* I'm glad you asked me that, William Clark. I want you to leave Elaine alone. I don't want her to have anything to do with you at all.

BILL. *(Swallowing hard)* But why?

JENNY. I'd sooner not discuss that.

BILL. Well—yes—*(Backs away to sofa.* CYRUS *looks at* BILL, *then* JENNY *and drops eyes to plate)* —but seems like I got a right to know something about it.

JENNY. I've said what I've got to say.

BILL. *(Doggedly)* There ain't nothing against my character that I know of.

JENNY. I've nothing to say about your character. I don't know anything about it.

BILL. And my folks are just as good as there are in this town.

JENNY. I've got nothing against your folks.

BILL. Well, then I don't see——

JENNY. You would see if you had eyes instead of mill-stones.

BILL. But——

JENNY. I won't have Elaine going around with the delivery boy for Bascom's store. Now that's all there is about it.

BILL. I don't figure to do that all my life. Everybody's got to start somewhere.

JENNY. I'm sick of hearing about where folks start. What I want to know is where they're going to finish.

ELAINE. *(Comes in from the kitchen; stops at door)* Why, Bill! (BILL *takes a step toward her. She toward him; then both stop.* BILL *smiles at her sheepishly. She looks from one to the other of the three.* CYRUS'S *eyes are fixed on his plate, but he has long since stopped eating.)*

JENNY. Humph! Now you're both here, you both understand me—— *(Turns sharply on* CYRUS*)* Are you listening to me, Cyrus?

CYRUS. *(In great haste)* Yes, Jenny. *(He spills his tea)* Shucks! Now I've spilled my tea. *(He mops at it with his napkin.)*

JENNY. I don't want you to come here, William Clark. I don't want you to come here at all, do you understand?

BILL. *(Impassively)* Yes, ma'am.

JENNY. And I want you to leave Elaine alone.

BILL. Yes, ma'am.

JENNY. You understand me, Elaine?

ELAINE. *(Calmly)* Yes, Mother.

JENNY. And you, Cyrus?

CYRUS. *(Has been paying rapt attention)* Yes, I guess that's plain enough, Jenny.

JENNY. Well, I hope it is. (MYRA *on landing;* MABEL *on upper steps; return in hats and coats.)*

BILL. How de do, Miss Bumpsted? (MYRA *nods superciliously, crosses* D.R. *of* MABEL; *exits to kitchen to get Mother's galoshes; and* MABEL, *hand on staircase and mouth open, titters delightedly.)* Well —I—— *(He twists his cap in an agony of embarrassment. He does not know how to get out, and he looks appealingly at* ELAINE) I—I thought it was the right thing to do, E—E—— *(Stutters with embarrassment)* E—Elaine.

ELAINE. *(Softly; a step forward)* Yes, Bill, I understand. It's all right.

BILL. Well—— *(Backs into sofa)* Well—I—I'm sorry, Mrs. Bumpsted. I—I—well, good evening, folks. *(Crosses and opens* C. *door.)*

CYRUS. *(Jumping up; crosses to* R. *of* BILL *at door;* ELAINE *a step to table)* Shucks! It's all right, Bill. Don't you feel badly. I——

JENNY. *(Warningly)* Cyrus!

CYRUS. Well, Bill, see you to-morrow.

BILL. *(Backing out of the door in terrible confusion)* Thank you—much obliged, Mr. Bumpsted.

CYRUS. Shucks! That's all right. *(Stands in the doorway)* Mind that step, Bill. There's ice on it. (MYRA *enters; crosses front to sofa.)* By jingoes! It's certainly getting colder.

MYRA. Well, of all the nerve! What did he want?

JENNY. *(Rises; crosses to front of sofa, putting on hat and coat)* Never mind.

MABEL. *(Moving down steps to* C. *door. Mimicking)* I—I thought it was the right thing to do. E—E—Elaine.

ELAINE. *(Furiously—*CYRUS *crosses around* R. *of table to chair and sits)* Don't you dare to mock him, you—you——

MABEL. My! What a long tail our cat's got.

MYRA. Such an impossible bumpkin!

ELAINE. You let him alone, Myra.

MYRA. Well, I should think I would.

ELAINE. I haven't seen any Chester Armstrongs running after you.

JENNY. Girls, girls, that'll do.

ELAINE. Well, they needn't——

JENNY. That will do, Elaine. (ELAINE *turns away and sits chair* D.R. JENNY *rises; she is putting on her hat and coat; turns back on* CYRUS.)

CYRUS. 'Twouldn't surprise me a mite if the old river was to freeze up to-night. 'Tain't been frozen solid for five years——

JENNY. Elaine——

CYRUS. *(He ponders)* Now I don't know if it's five years or six. I guess maybe it's six.

JENNY. Hurry up and get your things on.

ELAINE. I don't think I'll go, Mother.

JENNY. Nonsense! Why not?

ELAINE. *(Has hands together on knees)* I'd just as soon stay home and help father with the dishes.

CYRUS. Now, now, don't you worry about me, Elly. No, siree. I'll get along fine. You run along to the show and enjoy yourself. Shucks! What's a few dishes? Nothing.

MYRA. Well, she better make up her mind, Mother, before we're any later. *(Crosses around* L. *of sofa to* U.C.)

JENNY. Come, Elaine, hurry! Get your things!

ELAINE. I'd rather not, Mother. I—I've got a headache.

JENNY. It took you pretty sudden. Well—— *(She hesitates.)*

MABEL. We'll have to sit in the very front row unless we go instantly.

JENNY. All right, girls; go ahead. I'm coming. *(Crosses front into kitchen.* MYRA *and* MABEL *go out* C.)

CYRUS. Now, you better go along with them, Elly. You'll have a good time.

ELAINE. *(Shaking her head)* No, Father.

JENNY. *(Enters; crosses to* C., *going front of table)* Cyrus!

CYRUS. Yes, Jenny.

JENNY. You're not going back to the store this evening?

CYRUS. Land's sake, no! I'll be right here till you come back. Don't you worry about the house or anything. I won't leave it for a moment.

JENNY. Well—— *(She hesitates, then goes to the door.* CYRUS *and* ELAINE *rise.)* Don't you go out of the house, Elaine.

ELAINE. No, Mother.

JENNY. Well—— *(She starts out of the door, then turns back)* And be mighty careful how you handle the china. (CYRUS *unconsciously pushes a cup to* C. *of table.)* Last time you washed the dishes you broke a cup.

CYRUS. I won't break anything to-night, Jenny. No, siree. *(Goes to the* C. *door.)*

JENNY. *(Sticking her head back into room)* And don't let those bone-handled knives stand in the water. It ruins them.

CYRUS. Don't you worry, Jenny. You just have a good time. (JENNY *exits* C.) Mind that step with the ice. Good-bye. *(Closes door.* ELAINE *and* CYRUS *smile at each other, relieved.)* My! that wind certainly is sharp. It just like to goes clear through you. *(Resumes his seat.)*

ELAINE. *(Crosses to* R. *of father)* How would you like a cup of nice hot tea, Father?

CYRUS. Well—now.

ELAINE. I'll get it for you.

CYRUS. *(Half rises)* Now don't you bother. I can get it myself, Elly.

ELAINE. *(Kissing him on the forehead)* You just stay right where you are, Father. A little waiting on won't hurt you. *(Goes into kitchen and returns in a*

moment with a cup of tea and a plate of biscuits; stands L. *of Father)* There!

CYRUS. My gracious! Hot biscuits!

ELAINE. I had them hidden in the back corner of the oven.

CYRUS. My, my! Now ain't you your father's girl? Shucks! I don't know how I'd get along without you, Elly. *(And his mild little eyes are moist with tears.)*

ELAINE. Drink your tea, and eat your biscuits, Father, while they're hot; and here's some strawberry preserve to go with them. (ELAINE *slowly crosses to back of Mother's chair and stands there.)*

CYRUS. That's fine! *(And he eats with enjoyment.* ELAINE *watches him with an affectionate but slightly calculating expression. For a few moments there is silence. Pause.)*

ELAINE. Father—— *(She hesitates.)*

CYRUS. Yes, Elly?

ELAINE. Did you know Chester Armstrong, Father?

CYRUS. No, sir, I never did, but sakes alive! I know what he looks like just as if he was standing here.

ELAINE. *(Musing)* Over six feet in his stockings.

CYRUS. That's right, Elly, and broad shoulders and curly black hair and a black moustache. *(He reflects)* Only I reckon maybe it'd be a little gray now.

ELAINE. Why didn't Mother marry him—I wonder?

CYRUS. Well, now, Elly, I declare to goodness, I don't know. She always says because she didn't have good sense, but I guess it's the only time she didn't except maybe the time she married me.

ELAINE. *(Busy with her thoughts)* He was young and handsome and—and rich.

CYRUS. Rich? Well, I should say he was. Diamond rings and gold watches and horses and carriages, and, my! I don't know what. You've heard your mother tell about those things.

ELAINE. *(Dreamily)* Yes—ever since I can remember.

CYRUS. Why, I suppose by now Chester Armstrong's one of the richest men in the world, if we only knew it.

ELAINE. It must be wonderful to be rich.

CYRUS. Yes, I should think it might be, Elly. I should think it might be. *(He sighs)* I wouldn't have missed it so much if it hadn't been for your mother, but——

ELAINE. You've done the best you could, Father.

CYRUS. Yes, I have, Elly. But I just never had the knack of getting along, I guess. Maybe if I'd been six feet in my stockings and had a black moustache, I'd have done better. *(He sighs humorously.)*

ELAINE. *(Laughing)* You'd look funny with a black moustache, Father.

CYRUS. *(Chuckling)* That's a fact. I guess I would. I don't think you could rig me up to be any different.

ELAINE. I don't think so, Father.

CYRUS. No, sir, I'm just the way I am, but——- *(He finishes meal. Sighs again)* It's been pretty hard on your mother.

ELAINE. *(Hesitantly; leaning forward. Sits on* R. *arm of chair where she is standing)* Why—why do you suppose Mother married you?

CYRUS. *(Slowly; moving close to* ELLY *with chair)* Well, now, sir, I don't know. I've often wondered about that myself.

ELAINE. Did she take very long to make up her mind?

CYRUS. *(Playing with salt-shaker)* No, she didn't. She made up her mind right quick. I asked her and

she said "yes," and that was all there was about it. *(Leans back.)*

ELAINE. *(Pause)* Oh! *(Leans back.)*

CYRUS. I suppose maybe she wasn't thinking.

ELAINE. *(Leans forward)* Did Mabel and Myra ever have any beaux, Father?

CYRUS. Oh, yes. They did. They both did when they were young. They were right pretty, those girls, when they were little things—yes, sir, they were right pretty.

ELAINE. Well, they haven't had any beaux for a long time, have they?

CYRUS. *(Reluctantly)* No, I expect not, Elly. They've got to be so blamed particular now, and—and it ain't—— *(He breaks off with trouble growing in his face.)*

ELAINE. They're not in a position to do much choosing now, are they, Father?

CYRUS. W-e-l-l, I—I reckon it ain't as easy for them now as it would have been a few years back.

ELAINE. *(Musing)* They've been waiting for Chester Armstrongs.

CYRUS. *(Sighing)* I expect maybe that's it.

ELAINE. *(Grimly to herself)* Mother taught them to do that. She made them do it.

CYRUS. *(Anxiously)* Shucks! Now we mustn't say things like that. Your mother knows what's best for all of you.

ELAINE. *(Hesitantly)* I want to talk to you about —about something, Father.

CYRUS. Yes, Elly. What is it?

ELAINE. It—it's about Bill Clark.

CYRUS. *(Rises)* My sakes! We mustn't talk about Bill Clark.

ELAINE. I don't see why.

CYRUS. Elly, you know that's strictly against the rules. I didn't see where you were talking me to, you rascal. *(Crosses C., going around above table.)*

ELAINE. *(Following him to his* R.*)* But you like him, don't you, Father?

CYRUS. Now, Elly, you quit. You know what your mother said. She told us all what she wanted.

ELAINE. I only asked you a question.

CYRUS. *(Cracking his fingers)* Well, it's a bad kind of question. You'll just get us all into trouble.

ELAINE. But do you like him, Father?

CYRUS. I don't want to talk about him at all. *(He bustles toward the table; she intercepts him at* C.*)* Let's get at these dishes before the grease gets stiff.

ELAINE. *(Pinning his arms)* Do you like him? Now you answer me. I don't see what harm that is.

CYRUS. *(Crosses to* L. *of chair* L. *of table.* ELAINE *crosses to his* L., *taking hold of his arms; sitting him into chair. Struggling)* Elly, you rascal!

ELAINE. Father, now you answer me. *(She pushes him into a chair)* Who saved hot biscuits for you to-night?

CYRUS. Shucks! You do get around me.

ELAINE. Just a simple little question.

CYRUS. *(Grudgingly)* Well, now—suppose I do like him, what then?

ELAINE. You darling! *(Runs hands over his head)* That's all I want to know.

CYRUS. Don't you go and tell your mother I said so.

ELAINE. *(Cheerfully)* I won't.

CYRUS. I don't know anything about such things, and my judgment's been bad all my life. Now you mind. She knows what's good for you. *(Rises; starts* D.R.*)*

ELAINE. *(Grabs hold of him)* But you don't know anything against Bill, do you?

CYRUS. *(Grumbling)* I don't know anything about him one way or another. *(Reluctantly)* Now that's the end of that. Let's get at these dishes. *(Crosses front of table to* R. *of it.)*

ELAINE. All right, dear. I'll get your apron. *(She runs into kitchen and returns with a bib apron—which she ties around his waist)* There you are! How's that?

CYRUS. *(Surveying himself)* It's not my regular apron. It's your mother's.

ELAINE. (CYRUS *starts to take it off)* I couldn't find yours. But it's all right, isn't it?

CYRUS. *(Doubtfully)* Yes, so long as I don't get it mussed.

ELAINE. *(Laughing)* You do look funny in it.

CYRUS. *(Chuckling)* Well, I guess even Chester Armstrong would look funny in this outfit.

ELAINE. Of course he would. Now fill the dishpan, Father, and bring it in here. *(Crosses to* L. *of table, above it)* The hot water's on the back of the stove. I'll get things ready. (CYRUS *trots into the kitchen, and* ELAINE *turns back an end of the cloth and busies herself about the table.)*

CYRUS. *(From the kitchen)* My gracious, Elly! This water is hot.

(KNOCK.)

ELAINE. Put a little cold in it. *(There is a discreet knock at the door. She hurries to it.)*

CYRUS. Yes, I guess I better had.

(ELAINE *opens the door a crack, humming noisily and watching the kitchen.* BILL *sticks his head into the room.)*

BILL. Elaine! Honey! *(His teeth are chattering with the cold.)*

ELAINE. 'Sh, 'sh! (BILL'S *head disappears like a flash and* ELAINE *closes the door as* CYRUS *appears in kitchen doorway.)*

CYRUS. What you doing there?

ELAINE. Just getting a breath of fresh air.

(Slowly crosses D.C., L. *of table)* It's sort of stuffy in here.

CYRUS. *(Sniffing)* Well, I don't know but it is. Say, Elly, I can't find the soap.

ELAINE. We used it all up at noon. You'll have to go down cellar and get a fresh piece.

(READY Door Slam R.*)*

CYRUS. *(Resignedly)* Yes. All right. *(And he goes back into the kitchen.)*

(ELAINE *follows on tiptoe to the door, determines that the coast is clear, and then flies to* C. *door. She opens the door and* BILL *slips into the room.* BILL *crosses front of* ELLY *to* U.L. *corner of table.* ELAINE *stands* R. *of* BILL.*)*

BILL. Gosh, honey, I'm frozen solid!

ELAINE. *(Much concerned)* You poor dear!

BILL. I been waiting out there. I thought maybe your father'd go down to the store or something.

ELAINE. But what is it, Bill?

BILL. I have to have a talk with you. Can't you come out?

ELAINE. I can't possibly.

BILL. *(Helplessly)* But——

ELAINE. *(Hastily)* You wait out there by the gate. I'll see. I declare I don't know what to do.

BILL. 'Tain't more than forty degrees below zero out there by that gate.

(DOOR Slam.)

ELAINE. Poor dear! I'm sorry. *(Door slam* R. *Suddenly* ELAINE *hears returning footsteps)* He's coming back. Hurry, Bill! Please——

BILL. Well, I——

ELAINE. Leave it to me. I'll try to get Father out somehow.

BILL. You're some girl, Elaine! (ELAINE *half closes* C. *door.* BILL *pokes his head back in and*

snatches a kiss and slips through the door. ELAINE *closes it, humming loudly, and the next instant* CYRUS *appears in the* R. *doorway.* ELAINE *crosses to above table; clears dishes there.)*

CYRUS. Shucks! Elly, the soap was setting right there on the sink.

ELAINE. *(Crosses* D. *to* U. *of table)* Was it, Father? Well, I declare!

CYRUS. *(Gazing ruefully at his apron)* And I caught this dratted apron on a nail going down cellar. My gracious! Look at that!

ELAINE. Goodness! You will catch it.

CYRUS. I told you I didn't want to wear it. I knew something'd happen to the darn thing. *(Sadly)* I expect I won't hear the last of this for a long time.

ELAINE. Don't worry about it, Father. What's an apron more or less? *(Moves* C.*)*

CYRUS. That's easy enough to say, but——

ELAINE. Oh, I wouldn't care about an apron.

CYRUS. No! But your mother will. *(He examines it ruefully)* Well, anyway, it can't be helped. *(And he trots into the kitchen.* ELAINE *folds up* R. *side of tablecloth; ponders the situation with knitted brows; crosses to window. In a moment* CYRUS *returns with the dishpan. To* R. *of table)* There she is! Now it won't take no time. Good hot water and plenty of soap! That's what your mother always says. *(Sticks his finger in the water)* By jiminey! It is hot, too. Let me see, now, what'd I better do first? I guess I better do them bone-handled knives. Your mother's mighty choice of them. And then the glasses and then the china. Yep, that's it. *(He picks up a handful of knives and drops them into the pan.)*

ELAINE. *(Crosses to* L. *of table by going above it to* L. *of father. With sudden resolution)* Father!

"Broken Dishes"

Act I. See Page 8

CYRUS. *(Flirting with the dish water with a wash cloth on the end of a fork)* Yes, Elly?

ELAINE. I just can't stand it to see you washing dishes.

CYRUS. Why, Elly!

ELAINE. I just don't like it. It isn't right. It—it's woman's work.

CYRUS. Oh, I don't mind!

ELAINE. Well, I do.

CYRUS. But, Elly, you been seeing me wash dishes all your life.

ELAINE. Yes, I have, and it's time you stopped now.

CYRUS. Shucks!

ELAINE. Now you just take off that apron. I'll 'tend to the dishes.

CYRUS. My goodness! What's got into you?

ELAINE. I won't have it, that's all. *(She pulls away the apron and throws it into kitchen.)*

CYRUS. Well,—my gracious! I can wipe 'em, can't I?

ELAINE. No, sir, you can't touch them. *(Crosses to R. of father.)*

CYRUS. It beats me what's got into you.

ELAINE. *(Back of him, hands on his shoulders)* Father!

CYRUS. Yes.

ELAINE. You never mind about that. *(She feels his vest pockets)* Father—oh, you haven't got a cigar.

CYRUS. No, I don't think I have. *(Feels in his pockets)* No, sir, not a one.

ELAINE. Well, I tell you what you do.

CYRUS. What?

ELAINE. *(Crosses to L. of door C. by going R. above table; gets cap; crosses down; puts it on him)* You just slip on your hat and coat and trot down town and get one.

CYRUS. *(Crosses to down* L. *of table; horrified)* Oh, no! I couldn't do that.

ELAINE. Why not?

CYRUS. I promised your mother I wouldn't go out of the house.

ELAINE. It won't take you ten minutes and I'll be right here.

CYRUS. My gracious! No, it wouldn't ever do.

ELAINE. She won't know a thing about it. (CYRUS *shakes his head violently.* ELAINE *crosses a few steps* U.C.) I'll get your overcoat.

CYRUS. No, siree, I will not, and I don't want a cigar anyway. It's too cold to set out on the porch to-night.

ELAINE. *(Crosses* D.C. *near table* L. *of father)* You can sit right here in this room and smoke.

CYRUS. *(Incredulously)* Elaine Bumpsted! What you thinking about?

ELAINE. Well, you can.

CYRUS. You know your mother don't allow me to smoke in the house.

ELAINE. She won't know anything about it. *(Urging him to go)* Anyway we could blow it all out before she gets back.

CYRUS. No, siree, you couldn't fool her. My gracious! I don't know what's got into you.

ELAINE. *(A few steps* L.C.) I'll bet you Chester Armstrong smokes just wherever he likes. *(Stops.)*

CYRUS. Well, maybe he does. *(He sighs)* But I'm different that way.

ELAINE. *(Crosses up and throws cap on window-seat; crosses down and turns on him. Almost crying with vexation)* Oh, Father! Why haven't you got a little more backbone?

CYRUS. *(Turns, faces her)* I guess I'm just the way God made me, Elly.

ELAINE. But God didn't make you that way, Father.

CYRUS. *(Turns away from her)* I expect it is kind of mean to wish it on God.

ELAINE. You weren't this way always, Father. You couldn't have been.

CYRUS. *(Doubtfully)* Well, I don't know——

ELAINE. When you were a young man, when you first met Mother, you weren't like that then, were you?

CYRUS. A body don't seem to himself to change much. I declare I don't know.

ELAINE. *(Crosses near father; kneeling; passionately)* Well, I know: you weren't. Something happened to you and changed you. Oh, no! Not all at once, but gradually, a little at a time. I know, I know, it's plain enough.

CYRUS. *(Startled)* Why, what you talking about, Elly?

ELAINE. Oh, don't you see, Father dear? It's the same thing that happened to Myra and to Mabel, only—only it was different with them.

CYRUS. *(Vacantly)* I declare——

ELAINE. It's Chester Armstrong, Father.

CYRUS. Chester Armstrong?

ELAINE. Why, yes, of course, that's what it is. He's hung over you so many years. You're buried by him—smothered. *(Pause)* It's like a great black shadow pressed down on your soul.

CYRUS. *(Staring at her)* My stars!

ELAINE. And it's only a shadow, Father.

CYRUS. A shadow?

ELAINE. Why, yes, that's all. Not one of us but Mother ever knew him—ever saw him. And yet—*(She laughs a little wildly)*—next to Mother, he's the most important member of the family.

CYRUS. *(Rises)* My gracious, Elly, how you talk!

ELAINE. *(Rises. Bitterly)* Chester Armstrong! I learned that name, Father, before I learned our

own. And it was only a memory then, a second-hand memory.

CYRUS. *(Shaking his head)* I swear I don't know what's got into you.

ELAINE. *(Pause. Kissing him)* Never mind, dear. It doesn't matter. *(She presses her cheek against his)* You're the kindest, gentlest, lovablest father in the world, and I wouldn't trade you for a hundred Chester Armstrongs.

CYRUS. *(Affected)* You wouldn't?

ELAINE. No, sir, no matter what he was like.

CYRUS. *(Crosses front of table to* R. *of it; faces her, as if going to dishpan)* Well, you know pretty well what he was like.

ELAINE. Do I? I wonder. *(Musing)* Time puts halos around a lot of second-rate things. *(Crosses to* R. *of sofa.)*

CYRUS. *(Shocked)* Elly! *(Picks up dish cloth.)* *(KNOCK.)*

ELAINE. *(Faces door)* Come in.

SAM. *(Enters* C. *Snappishly)* How do, Miss Bumpsted? How're ye, Cy?

CYRUS. Well, well, if it ain't Sam Green! Mighty glad to see you, Sam. Lay off your coat. Set down.

SAM. No, I won't. I'm going to Lodge. Thought maybe you'd go.

CYRUS. Well, now, that's mighty nice of you, Sam, but I don't reckon I'd better go to-night.

SAM. Suit yourself. *(Starts for the door)* Going to install a new Mogul to-night.

CYRUS. By gracious—that's right!

SAM. Going to be a big feed 'n' everything. I wouldn't miss it.

CYRUS. Well, I would like to go right well, Sam—*(Pause.* ELAINE *starts to get ulster and cap;* ELAINE *stops)*—but I don't think I better. (ELAINE, *who has been listening hopefully, turns away with a shrug of despair. Sits on sofa;* R. *arm of it.)*

SAM. Humph! I walked all the way in from the cemetery—below zero, too. That's what I think about it. *(He opens the door.)*

CYRUS. I'd like to go, but—— *(Looks at dirty dishes)* Well, you know how it is, Sam.

SAM. *(Savagely)* No, I don't, no such a thing. Night. *(And he bounces out of the room.)*

CYRUS. *(Crosses to door)* Mind that step, Sam. There's ice on it, and much obliged to you for coming. *(Closes the door and wanders restlessly around the room; near table,* R. *of it.* ELAINE *watches him narrowly.)* Pshaw! I would kind of like to see that installation. *(A pause)* I always been meaning to see one of those things ever since I been in that Lodge. *(A pause)* I don't think I've been to a Lodge meeting in two years. *(Crosses above table to* C. *He ponders)* Maybe it's three. *(Crosses to window)* My gracious! I believe it is. *(A pause)* Hum—well—— *(Stands in front of fire, rubbing his hands.)*

ELAINE. *(Rises; crosses to* L. *of father; when father gets to* C.*)* In conscience name, why don't you go, Father?

CYRUS. Why, you know, Elly, I promised your mother I wouldn't go out.

ELAINE. Well, suppose you did. Can't you change your mind?

CYRUS. *(Continues on to fireplace)* She wouldn't understand about it.

ELAINE. She needn't know about it.

CYRUS. No, no, 'twouldn't do. 'Twouldn't be honorable. (ELAINE *sighs helplessly; sits on window-seat, back to him.* CYRUS *continues after a reflective pause)* Of course I wouldn't have to stay out very long. *(A pause)* Shucks! I certainly would like to see that installation. *(A pause)* Elly!

ELAINE. *(Swings around)* Yes, Father?

CYRUS. How long does that picture show last? Do you know?

ELAINE. All evening, Father.

CYRUS. That so? *Only* one show, eh?

ELAINE. Only one show, Father.

CYRUS. Hum—— *(A pause; wandering* D.S.C.*)* I reckon they won't get back here much before half past ten. *(A pause. Crosses front to* R. *of table)* Anyway not before ten o'clock. (ELAINE *rises; crosses to back of sofa. A pause)* They couldn't get here before half past nine. *(A pause)* No, sir. I don't guess they could. *(Glances at clock and strolls across the room, humming discordantly and cracking his finger joints.* ELAINE *watches him closely.)* I think that installation happens about half past eight. Yes, sir, about half past eight. *(Plays with chair* U. *of table. A pause)* Anyway between eight thirty and nine. And it lasts about half an hour.

ELAINE. You could leave before it was over if you had to.

CYRUS. Huh?

ELAINE. Um—hum.

CYRUS. Hum! Hum! *(Crosses above table to fireplace.* ELAINE *crosses front of sofa to window; hums loudly; gets overcoat. A pause)* Takes about ten minutes to walk down, and about ten minutes to walk back. *(Stares at the clock)* Hum—— (ELAINE, *unnoted by him, has gotten his coat.)*

ELAINE. *(Holds out the coat with a smile)* Here's your coat, Father. (CYRUS *faces her, back to audience. She shoves coat on* L. *arm; turns him to* R. *around, pushing other arm in coat. Then* CYRUS *crosses around* L. *of sofa to* D.L.C.*)*

CYRUS. *(Smiling in spite of himself)* Now, you little rascal, you're just tempting me. (ELAINE *pushes coat through his arms. But somehow or other his arms find their way into the sleeves)* Get thee behind me, Satan!

ELAINE. That's just where I am, Father, pushing you into trouble. *(She pushes him toward door. He resists, moving to front of table. She pushes him to door* C. *She wraps a woolen scarf around his throat.)*

CYRUS. By gracious! I never felt so wicked in my life.

ELAINE. Nonsense! *(She puts on his cap and pulls the flaps over his ears)* Now trot along and have a good time, and don't come home till you want to.

CYRUS. Say, Elly, you won't be afraid staying here alone?

ELAINE. Don't be silly. *(Pushing him closer to* C. *door.)*

CYRUS. *(Doubtfully)* Well—— (ELAINE *opens the door.)* Now, I'll be home by ten minutes past nine. That's the very latest. (ELAINE *pushes him toward door.)* Maybe long before that.

ELAINE. Good-bye, Father. *(She kisses him)* Have a good time.

CYRUS. Well—— *(He hesitates)* Well, all right, dogged if I don't. *(And he goes out* C.*)*

ELAINE. Poor Father—— *(She goes to the window, scratches a hole in the frost and watches through it for* BILL. *In a moment, with an exclamation of satisfaction, she runs to the door and opens it.* BILL *enters the room, shaking with cold.* ELAINE *takes him front of sofa to fire)* You darling! Go over there to the fire, quick! Here, take off your things! *(She pulls off his mittens. His hands are so cold they are numb and useless.)* There's no one here. Father's gone to Lodge and he won't be back for a long time. Great hat! But you are frozen.

BILL. I—I—I—I—I—— B—B—B—B—B—— *(It's quite no use. His teeth are chattering like castanets.)*

ELAINE. There, there, dear. Don't try to talk till you get warm. Sit down here in Father's chair.

(D.L. She pushes BILL *into chair.* BILL *sits down by the fire.* ELAINE *crosses to table, looking for something)* I wish I had something warm to give you. *(She glances around room and her eye falls on the cider jug)* I wonder if that would do you any good.

BILL. W-W-W-W-What?

ELAINE. Cider. (BILL *shakes his head.)* It's hard.

BILL. Oh! *(He smiles and nods.)*

ELAINE. Well, I'll give you a little—*(Crosses to table* R. *of it)*—just a drop.

BILL. Ah! (ELAINE *gives him a little in a cup. He gulps it down and is seized with a terrible fit of strangled coughing.* ELAINE *returns cup to table and crosses back to his* R.*)* Oh—oh, Lord!—Whew! Ugh! Hard? Gosh! I'll say it is.

ELAINE. Oh, I'm sorry, Bill.

BILL. Don't worry, honey; it's just what I needed. Gee! I can feel it in my toes.

ELAINE. But are you warm, dear?

BILL. Warm? Say, I'm on fire. *(He folds her in his arms)* Gee, honey, I haven't had you to myself for a minute for so long. *(He kisses her)* Well, anyway, that pays me for setting an hour in that snowdrift and losing one ear and two toes.

ELAINE. *(Laughing)* Bill!

BILL. Wait! Listen, now! *(He follows her and takes her hands. Very soberly)* You do love me, don't you, Elaine?

ELAINE. *(With equal soberness)* Yes, Bill.

BILL. I just want to be sure, honey.

ELAINE. I thought we settled that long ago!

BILL. Yes, we did—but we can't go on this way, because your mother ain't going to change her mind. (BILL *and* ELAINE L. *of sofa.)*

ELAINE. *(Shaking her head)* No.

BILL. She'll bust things up for us, just like she did for Myra and Mabel.

ELAINE. She just wore them out, I guess, and I won't let her do that to me—I won't—I won't.

BILL. Well, then, we—we've got to do something, honey.

ELAINE. Yes, Bill, but what?

BILL. There's only one way out. *(A pause.* ELAINE *stares at him.)* She couldn't come between us if we were married.

ELAINE. *(Breathlessly)* Bill!

BILL. It wouldn't matter then what she did.

ELAINE. No. But——

BILL. I've got a job and my credit's pretty good. I guess we could get along some way—if you aren't afraid to take a chance, Elaine.

ELAINE. *(Looking straight into his eyes)* I wouldn't be afraid with you, Bill.

BILL. *(A pause)* Does that mean you'd marry *me —right now?* (ELAINE *nods slowly.) To-night?*

ELAINE. Yes, Bill.

BILL. Oh, Lord! Whew! *(He takes her in his arms again)* I—I thought you would, but I wasn't sure. Oh, Elaine!

ELAINE. *(Laughing hysterically)* But of course it's ridiculous. We can't. You haven't anyone to marry us. You haven't even a license.

BILL. I have! I have! That's where you got fooled. I've got it right here in my pocket.

ELAINE. Bill!

BILL. I got it this afternoon. All we have to do is to take this to a preacher.

ELAINE. Preacher? What preacher?

BILL. Why, any preacher. But I was sort of figuring on old man Stump.

ELAINE. Why, he's our next door neighbor, Bill. Do you suppose he'd marry me without mother's consent?

BILL. Why not? You're of legal age. You've got a right to do as you please.

ELAINE. But he wouldn't. He never would. He'd be afraid. Why, Bill, there isn't a minister in this town would marry us unless mother was there and said it was all right.

BILL. But——

ELAINE. You know that's true if you stop and think. You know it is.

BILL. *(Gloomily)* I guess that's right. *(He sits down in utter dejection* R. *of sofa on arm)* I never thought of that. *(A pause)* Well, I suppose that's that.

ELAINE. *(Dejectedly. She crosses near him,* L. *of him)* Yes, Bill.

BILL. *(Suddenly. Rises)* Say, I've got it!

ELAINE. What?

(LIGHTS No. 3.)

BILL. We could run away—elope.

ELAINE. Elope?

BILL. Yes. To the city. Nobody there ever heard of your mother.

ELAINE. *(Shaking her head)* No.

BILL. Why?

ELAINE. I don't want to do that. That's not the way to start, Bill. As if I were ashamed of marrying you.

BILL. But, honey—— *(He is fishing in his pocket.)*

ELAINE. *(*L. *of* BILL*)* It's my pride and self-respect. I always meant to be married in my own home, and I don't see why I shouldn't. It's only fair and right.

BILL. *(Gazing ruefully at some money in his hand; front of sofa)* Well, anyway, I guess I haven't enough money for that.

ELAINE. We must think of something else, dear.

BILL. Gee, honey!

ELAINE. What?

BILL. How about your father?

ELAINE. *(At sea)* How do you mean?

BILL. Suppose we got his consent?

ELAINE. *(Incredulously)* Father's consent? What good would that do?

BILL. Old man Stump would take that, wouldn't he?

ELAINE. But no one pays any attention to Father, Bill.

BILL. *(Excitedly)* But he's your father.

ELAINE. *(The excitement is contagious)* Oh! I see what you mean, dear, I do. I never thought of it before. *(She paces across the room)* He is my father, and he has just as much to say about it as Mother has. Perhaps more.

BILL. That's it, honey.

ELAINE. Dr. Stump would have to marry us if Father said so.

BILL. *(Dubiously)* Yes, but will he?

ELAINE. Father? He must, Bill. He must. We'll wait till he comes home.

BILL. That's the stuff, Elaine.

ELAINE. We shall have to be absolutely firm.

BILL. Like rocks.

ELAINE. Like steel.

BILL. Say, but you're some girl!

ELAINE. Wait now till I fix things. (BILL *crosses to front of sofa; fingers ring.* ELAINE *turns out* R. *bracket chandelier; crosses to* R. *of* BILL; *they sit.)*

(LIGHTS No. 4.)

BILL. I got something to show you.

ELAINE. You have—what?

BILL. Oh, not much. *(He takes a ring box from his pocket and hands it to her.)*

ELAINE. Bill!

BILL. Open it up and have a look.

ELAINE. Oh—— *(She opens it and discloses a very small solitaire.)*

BILL. It's pretty small, but it's real, anyway.

ELAINE. *(Very much affected)* It's the most beautiful thing I ever saw, Bill. *(Her voice breaks)* You darling! *(And she slides across the couch to him.)*

BILL. Do you really like it? Honest?

ELAINE. Like it? I love it. *(She slips it on her finger and flashes it in the light)* Doesn't it sparkle, though?

BILL. It does some, but I'll get you a bigger one some day if—— *(He sighs.)*

ELAINE. You'll never get me anything that will please me half so much. When we have a home of our own we'll always have nice soft lights, and a cheerful fire, and a big soft couch, not like this one, Bill.

BILL. *(Sighing with contentment)* I'm doing pretty well with this.

ELAINE. Bill, dear.

BILL. Yes, honey.

ELAINE. *(Tucking a cushion behind his back)* Are you comfy, dear? *(She snuggles up to him.)*

BILL. Am I?

ELAINE. Happy?

BILL. Oh, boy! *(They kiss; both sigh delightedly. The Curtain descends slowly.)*

CURTAIN

ACT II

The same room an hour and a half later.

ELAINE *and* BILL *are snuggled up on the couch just as we left them. A few moments pass. The clock begins to strike.*

(READY Clock Striking. Set Clock to nine. Ready Lights up. Clock Strikes Nine.)

ELAINE. Listen! *(She straightens up, counting)* Four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. *(Looks at clock)* My goodness! Bill, it can't be nine o'clock.

BILL. It sure is.

ELAINE. Father may be home any moment now.

BILL. *(Startled)* Gee! That's right.

ELAINE. *(Laughing)* Are you frightened?

BILL. *(Doubtfully)* N-o.

ELAINE. You needn't be—of Father. *(She sighs)* Poor Father! I don't know how he'll get along without me. I wouldn't leave him for anything or anybody in the world but you. But—*(She sighs again)*—I can't give you up, Bill, I can't. *(At this moment someone outside tries the door. They both jump up and stare at each other in consternation.* ELAINE R. *of* BILL. *The doorknob rattles noisily.* ELAINE *whispering)* Now, it's settled what we're going to do.

BILL. Yes, honey, but——

ELAINE. But what?

BILL. Suppose he won't?

ELAINE. *(Setting her chin)* Well—well—leave everything to me. *(KNOCK.)*

(There is a sharp knock at the door.)

BILL. *(Very nervously)* What'll I do?

ELAINE. Don't get excited. (BILL *starts for parlor.* ELAINE *calls)* I'm coming, Father. *(Whispering to* BILL; *pushing him down* D.L.*)* You go in. (BILL *starts for kitchen.)* There, dear, in the parlor. And stay there till I call you.

BILL. But——

ELAINE. *(Shaking her head)* Hush—hush! Don't talk. *(She picks up his hat and coat and follows him to the door)* It'll be dark in there and maybe a little cold. But you won't mind. *(She kisses him and pushes him through the door. The knocking has redoubled. She calls)* I'm coming, Father, as fast as I can. *(She turns on lights.)*

(LIGHTS No. 5.)

BILL. *(Sticking his head through the door)* Gee! Elaine, it's freezing in here. I think I'd sooner try the cellar.

(KNOCK.)

ELAINE. It's too late now. *(In response to the knocking)* I'm coming, Father. *(Crosses door* C.*)*

BILL. *(Sadly)* Well—— *(At door pulls up collar of coat and goes back into the parlor with a shiver.)*

(ELAINE *opens the* C. *door and* CYRUS *trots into the room.* ELAINE *closes door, leaving her on* R. *of* CYRUS.)

CYRUS. Whew! I just like to froze standing there on that porch.

ELAINE. I'm sorry, Father. I came as soon as I could. *(She unwraps his scarf and helps him off with his coat.)*

CYRUS. It's down below zero right now, and the river's freezing up solid. *(Anxiously)* Your mother ain't got home yet?

ELAINE. No.

CYRUS. Shucks! Well, I'm glad of that. *(He hurries over to the fire, rubbing his hands and hunching his shoulders.)*

ELAINE. Did you have a good time? *(Crosses. Sits on chair D.L.)*

CYRUS. *(Chuckling)* Well, I just did, Elly, and that's a fact. My gracious! It really was interesting. I saw them install the new Mogul. It's Pete Jones, you know, the fellow that runs the barber shop in the Grand Hotel.

ELAINE. *(Absently)* Yes, Father.

CYRUS. *(Paces U. and D. front of fireplace)* It's quite a ceremony, too. Yes, sir, it is. And we had hot coffee and doughnuts and apples, and they tasted mighty good, I tell you.

ELAINE. Well, you're glad you went, aren't you?

CYRUS. Well, I am! That's right—*(Crosses; puts her R. shoulder)*—and if it hadn't been for you I wouldn't have gone, Elly, bless your little heart. *(He crosses back to fire)* I had a right good time. Oh, yes! They passed cigars, too.

ELAINE. And did you smoke one?

CYRUS. Yes, I did, and Mr. Bascom was there, and he gave me one. I just thought I'd save that. *(He takes it out of his pocket and examines the wrapper)* Flor de Trocadero, shucks! I bet that's a good cigar, two for a quarter anyway. *(He puts it tenderly back in his pocket, crosses, sits L. on sofa)* And Mr. J. G. Smedley, President of the First National Bank, was there. He spoke to me. *(Gos-*

tures in a pleased manner) Yes, sir, he was right friendly. *(He fairly beams with satisfaction.)*

ELAINE. That was nice.

CYRUS. Mr. Smedley made a speech, too. It was a right good speech, yes, sir. It was about being patient and waiting for things, and how time don't amount to much if a fella's got something pleasant to look forward to.

ELAINE. Oh!

CYRUS. There's a whole lot in that, I tell you. 'Tain't no trick to wait if there's only just something nice and pleasant to wait for.

ELAINE. Yes, Father.

CYRUS. And how did you get along while I was gone?

ELAINE. Just fine, Father.

CYRUS. That's good. I'm glad to hear it. I did feel kind of mean about going away and leaving you with those dishes.

ELAINE. *(Starting violently)* Oh! The dishes! *(Rises; crosses above sofa to* C. *She has not thought of the dishes since he left. He glances around the room and his eye falls on the table. The piles of soiled dishes and the dishpan are just as he left them.)*

CYRUS. *(Rises, aghast)* My gracious! Elly! Why, you haven't done the dishes, child!

ELAINE. *(Helplessly)* No. *(Crosses to* L. *of table.)*

CYRUS. *(Crosses front of table to* R. *of it)* Great snakes! We got to light into them pretty quick. I don't know what your mother'd say if she got home and found things like this.

ELAINE. *(Stammering)* I—I forgot all about them.

CYRUS. Shucks! I should say you did. We'll have to tear around pretty lively now. Yes, siree. *(He dashes into the kitchen and returns immediately.* ELAINE *crosses to parlor door.)* My stars, Elly!

ELAINE. What?

CYRUS. *(Dismally)* The water's cold, and the fire's out. We are in a pickle. *(And he scratches his head helplessly.)*

ELAINE. Do you think Mother will have us hung, Father? *(And she laughs with a little strained note that is nervous and unnatural.)*

CYRUS. Well, she'll be pretty mad and that's a fact. Can't say I blame her much this time either. Haven't got a leg to stand on, no, sir, not a one. *(He takes two or three steps in one direction* C. *front of table and two or three in another:* R.C. *front of table)* I declare, I don't know where to start. *(Scratching his head)* Suppose I better make up the fire first. *(He starts for the kitchen.)*

ELAINE. *(Crosses* L.C. *to front of sofa at* R. *of it)* Father!

CYRUS. Yes?

ELAINE. Wait, please. I—I want to talk to you.

CYRUS. Talk? My land, Elly, I got no time to talk now.

ELAINE. *(Desperately)* Father! *(He pauses and looks at her closely, startled by the tone of her voice.)* I—I've got to talk to you.

CYRUS. Well, my gracious! You can wait till I start the fire, can't you?

ELAINE. *(Crosses* C.*)* No, I can't.

CYRUS. But we got to get those dishes done before your mother gets home.

ELAINE. *(Crosses to* L. *of table* L. *Moves away dishes near her to father, who moves them to* C. *of table)* I don't care anything about the dishes, Father.

CYRUS. You don't? *(Leans forward on table, fingers of* R. *hand on it. He stares at her in horrified amazement.)*

ELAINE. No.

CYRUS. But what'll your mother say?

ELAINE. I don't care what she says.

CYRUS. *(Aghast)* My gracious!

ELAINE. *(Stands upright)* Dishes aren't everything, Father. *(Crosses D. a step, L. of chair, L. of table. Moves chair little away from table)* This is something important. *(Her voice is tense and close to tears.)*

CYRUS. My, my! Why, what's got into you, Elly? *(He retraces his steps slowly, regarding her with anxiety and alarm.)*

ELAINE. Will you listen to me?

CYRUS. *(Crosses to* ELAINE, *below table)* Why, yes, of course I will. What is it, Elly?

ELAINE. *(Crosses around chair, L. of table to below it. Desperately)* It—it's about Bill Clark.

CYRUS. *(Incredulously)* About what?

ELAINE. *(Slowly)* About Bill Clark, Father.

CYRUS. Great snakes! I got no time to listen to anything about Bill Clark. My gracious! You gave me a start. I thought it was something serious. *(He pulls away from her, but she holds his sleeve.)*

ELAINE. It is serious.

CYRUS. Not to me it ain't; not with those dishes here.

ELAINE. Father!

CYRUS. *(Pulling at his sleeve)* Now, Elly, you let go, and stop your nonsense.

ELAINE. *(Raising her voice dangerously)* You've got to listen to me!

CYRUS. No, siree; no, I don't! Not about Bill Clark. *(He frees himself from her grasp and starts again for the kitchen.)*

ELAINE. Father! *(Crosses to front of table. He turns and looks at her)* I need your help so badly, and—and all you can think of is a few dirty dishes. I never asked you to help me before—never, not once in my life, and now—— *(She sinks down in a*

chair L. *of table, covers her face with her hands, and bursts into tears.)*

CYRUS. My stars, Elly! *(He rushes over to her* R.*)* Look here, now! Don't cry like that, please. I'll listen to you; of course I will, about anything. There, there now! Shucks! The dishes can wait. (ELAINE *starts drying her tears.)* Of course they can. I was only joking about that. *(He forces a mirthless laugh and steals a glance at the clock)* What's a few old dishes? Nothing. And we'll have plenty of time to get them done up afterwards if—if it don't take too long.

ELAINE. *(Stops crying)* You're the best father in the world.

CYRUS. *(Touched)* Me? Shucks! You'll have me crying too in a minute. *(He sits down beside her on the sofa)* Well, come on, now. Tell me all about it, Elly.

ELAINE. *(Drying her eyes)* Yes, Father. *(She is a little uncertain of the next step)* You're going to be surprised. *(Sits* R. *of sofa.)*

CYRUS. *(Faces her; back to audience. Anxious)* I hope it ain't unpleasant.

ELAINE. No, Father. *(She hesitates)* First I—I'll show you something.

CYRUS. *(Sits* L. *of* ELAINE*)* Yes? Well, all right. Let's see.

ELAINE. *(Dramatically)* There! *(She holds out her hand.)*

CYRUS. *(Vacantly)* There? Where? What? I don't see anything.

ELAINE. You don't see anything?

CYRUS. Well, I see your hand, that's all.

ELAINE. Don't you see anything different about my hand?

CYRUS. Different? About your hand? *(He takes hold of the hand and examines it closely.)*

ELAINE. Why, Father, are you blind?

CYRUS. *(Excitedly)* By jingoes! Now I see it! You've got a ring!

ELAINE. *(Laughing nervously)* Of course.

CYRUS. *(Delightedly)* Well, sir, now what do you know about that? A ring! By jiminy! A real diamond, too. I'll swear it is. It is, ain't it, Elly?

ELAINE. *(Proudly)* Yes, Father. *(She moves her hand)* Just look at it sparkle.

CYRUS. Shucks! It does, don't it? My, my! That's wonderful. I ain't surprised you forgot the dishes. I'm like to forget 'em myself. Where'd you get it?

ELAINE. From Bill.

CYRUS. *(Incredulously)* What?

ELAINE. He gave it to me.

CYRUS. Well, well, well, now who'd have thought it of him? *(He reflects for a moment, then shakes his head softly)* Pshaw! It's too bad, too.

ELAINE. Too bad? Why?

CYRUS. Why, your mother'll make you give it right back.

ELAINE. Oh! *(She shakes her head)* No, she won't, Father.

CYRUS. *(Gloomily)* Yes, she will; you see if she don't. *(He takes her hand and looks at the ring again)* Pretty little thing, too, dogged if it ain't—— Shucks! Well, it's too bad; yes, sir, it's too bad. *(He sighs and drops her hand)* Well, Elly, it's getting pretty late. I guess we better get along with—the—— *(And he gets up and goes toward the table to* C.*)*

ELAINE. *(Rises; crosses to him)* Father, don't you understand?

CYRUS. *(Stands* C.*)* Understand what?

ELAINE. *(On his* L.*)* It's my engagement ring.

CYRUS. *(Stupidly)* What's that? What'd you say?

ELAINE. Yes.

CYRUS. Great snakes! Elly, you out of your head?

ELAINE. No, Father.

CYRUS. You know blame well your mother'll never hear to such a thing.

ELAINE. I'm going to do it anyway, Father.

CYRUS. You are? *(He stares at her. The idea is new and preposterous. After a moment he dismisses it as an idle threat)* Aw, come, now, Elly! It's no use talking like that. You mind your mother.

ELAINE. *(Passionately)* I won't have my life ruined by anyone. And I won't sit around waiting till I'm an old maid and have lost what looks I've got.

CYRUS. *(Soothingly)* Elly! Elly!

ELAINE. I've a right to live my own life, and now that I've found a man I care for and that cares for me, I mean to marry him.

CYRUS. But you may make a mistake.

ELAINE. Anyone may make a mistake, but it's better to make your own mistakes than to have someone make them for you. Myra and Mabel had theirs made for them.

CYRUS. *(Shocked and grieved)* Oh, Elly!

ELAINE. Don't you think that Myra would have been better off with a home of her own, and maybe a child, than the way she is?

CYRUS. *(Pressing his hands to his head and sighing deeply)* I don't know, Elly. I declare I don't. Your mother's only wanted what was best for you, all of you. She loves you. You know that. She's only wanted to keep you from making a mistake like she made, that's all.

ELAINE. *(With her head high)* I don't think she made a mistake.

CYRUS. Oh, my gracious! Of course she did. Why, if she'd married Chester Armstrong——

ELAINE. I don't care anything about Chester Arm-

strong. I think Mother did mighty well when she married you.

CYRUS. Well, of course that's just foolishness. *(Drops head to side; she pulls it round.)* But it's nice to hear you say it, Elly—yes, sir, mighty nice.

ELAINE. And I believe it, too.

CYRUS. *(Laughs)* Shucks! Well, I suppose you want me to talk to your mother about Bill Clark, don't you?

ELAINE. No, Father.

CYRUS. No? *(He is tremendously relieved)* Oh!

ELAINE. All I want is your consent.

CYRUS. *(Vacantly)* My consent?

ELAINE. Yes.

CYRUS. But, great snakes! Elly, I've got nothing to do with it.

ELAINE. You're my father, aren't you?

CYRUS. Why, yes, of course, but—— *(He cracks his finger joints at a great rate.)*

ELAINE. You've got as much to say about it as Mother.

CYRUS. But what'll she say to me?

ELAINE. I don't know, Father, but she can't say anything she hasn't said before.

CYRUS. By jingoes! I guess that's right. Well—shucks, I guess I can't do no more than lose my life. *(He ponders.)*

(READY Vase Crash.)

ELAINE. *(Hanging on his words)* Then you do consent?

CYRUS. Hum—— Will your mother have to know about it?

ELAINE. I'm afraid she will.

CYRUS. *(Sorrowfully)* Oh! *(He ponders)* I bet there's a catch in this thing somewheres. *(And he smiles quizzically. With a fine gesture of abandon)* All right, yes, I do.

ELAINE. You darling! *(Playing with his coat*

lapels) You've made me very, very happy, Father.

CYRUS. Well, I'm glad of that, anyway. I'm glad it made you happy. *(Kiss.)* But 'twon't do you no good, now you see if it does. *(He disengages himself)* Now that's all settled, let's get along with those dishes. *(At this moment there is a muffled crash of broken glass)* My gracious! What's that?

(VASE Crash Off L.)

ELAINE. *(Crosses to front of sofa toward parlor)* I—I don't know.

CYRUS. *(Crosses to her. She stops him. Whispering)* Sounded like it was in the parlor.

ELAIN. No, no. It—it was down cellar, I'm sure.

CYRUS. Maybe it was. I guess I better look. *(And he starts for the kitchen. She half pushing him.)*

ELAINE. *(Eagerly)* Oh, yes! You'd better. Hurry, Father!

(At this moment the parlor door opens and BILL *appears on the threshold. He is holding awkwardly in front of him in both hands the fragments of a large and hideous china vase.)*

CYRUS. My stars! *(And he stares at* BILL *in speechless amazement.)*

BILL. *(Holding out the wreckage for* ELAINE'S *inspection)* I'm sorry, Elaine. I run against it in the dark.

ELAINE. *(Crosses to* R. *of* BILL.) Oh, Bill!

BILL. I guess maybe we can get it mended. *(She goes over, shaking her head ruefully.)*

CYRUS. *(Quite breathless from the shock)* What you doing in there, anyway, Bill Clark?

BILL. *(Shuffling his feet desperately)* I—I- -I —

ELAINE. *(Matter-of-factly)* I put him in there, Father.

CYRUS. You put him in there? Great snakes!

Child, don't you know there hasn't been anybody in that parlor since your Uncle Benjamin died?

ELAINE. I'm sorry, Father.

CYRUS. Sorry! I should think you would be. And what's that broken?

ELAINE. *(Takes fragments; crosses to* L. *of father. Carelessly)* Just an ugly old thing.

CYRUS. *(Aghast. Takes fragments)* Ugly old thing! My gracious! Elly, it's that hand-painted china vase Aunt Esther gave your mother. *(He examines the fragments critically)* Oh, my land! But this is terrible. *(Crosses to* R. *of table; tries to place fragments together.)*

ELAINE. *(Sorrowfully to* BILL. *Crosses to* BILL*)* My goodness, Bill, why couldn't you be careful?

BILL. It was dark in there.

ELAINE. Well, why didn't you stand still?

BILL. *(Miserably)* Well, I did, but my feet went to sleep.

ELAINE. Oh! *(She sighs)* Never mind, dear; it can't be helped.

CYRUS. *(Faces them. Completing the inquest)* Well, I just don't know what your mother's going to say when she sees this. *(He shakes his head)* No, sir, I just don't know.

BILL. I—I'll get it mended, Mr. Bumpsted.

CYRUS. *(Takes fragments; starts for kitchen; then sadly)* You can't never mend that, no, siree. That's finished. *(He puts the vase down on chair upstage against* R. *wall and turns suddenly on* BILL*)* But—*(Places fragments)*—look-a here, Bill Clark. I don't understand what you're doing in this house at all. No, sir, I just don't understand.

BILL. *(In terrible confusion)* I—I—I——

ELAINE. Never mind, Bill—*(Folds arms on breast)* —you leave things to me.

CYRUS. But listen here, Elly. I want to know.

ELAINE. I'll tell you everything. *(Crosses to chair*

L. *of table. She takes a deep breath)* After you went down town Bill called to see me. *(Turns head to* BILL.*)*

CYRUS. *(Gives* BILL *a sharp look)* But you'd no business to let him in. You know what your mother said.

ELAINE. *(A step to* BILL.*)* Why, Father, he was almost frozen. (BILL *nods.)* He'd been waiting out there in the cold.

CYRUS. Well, he needn't have.

ELAINE. *(Unfolds arms. Apparently horrified)* Father, you don't mean to say you'd turn anyone away from your door on a night like this.

CYRUS. *(Confused)* My stars! Elly, what you talking about? Bill Clark's got a home, ain't he? He don't live here.

ELAINE. *(Waves* L. *hand at* BILL. *Brilliantly)* But he was here.

CYRUS. *(Helplessly)* Well, I'll swear I just can't make sense out of what you say. *(He scratches his head)* Suppose he was here. What'd you want to go and put him in the parlor for?

ELAINE. *(Impatiently)* Well, I had to put him somewhere, didn't I?

CYRUS. *(Wrinkling his brows)* Huh? How's that?

ELAINE. When I heard you coming, Father, don't you see? What else could I do? *(Crosses to* L. *of father.)*

CYRUS. *(Staring at her helplessly)* Well, I declare—— *(He can't make head or tail of it)* Shucks! I knew I shouldn't have gone out!

ELAINE. *(A few steps to* BILL. *Plaintively)* But you do see, don't you, Father?

CYRUS. No, sir, I don't see a blame thing.

ELAINE. *(Crosses few steps to father)* But, Father——

CYRUS. And I don't want to talk about it any

more. The further you go the worse it gets. *(He crosses to* ELLY, *urging her to get* BILL *out)* But you get him out of here now, Elly. *(He looks at the clock)* My gracious! We got to get at those dishes. *(Crosses to* R. *of table.)*

ELAINE. *(Crosses to* L. *of table. Warningly)* You know what you promised me, Father.

CYRUS. *(Quite beside himself)* I didn't promise you nothing about putting Bill Clark in the parlor or breaking up your mother's china vases.

ELAINE. No, but you know what you did promise.

CYRUS. *(Irritably)* Well, I ain't gone back on it, have I? But I don't know but what I ought to after what's happened. *(He rattles the dishes about on the table.)*

ELAINE. *(Crosses to* R. *of* BILL. *Flying over to* BILL*)* You go ahead now, Bill, quickly—just as we planned.

BILL. *(Ecstatically)* Gee! You're a brick, Elaine.

CYRUS. *(Crosses above table to up* C.; *picks up a glass. Suspiciously)* What you two talking about?

ELAINE. Nothing, Father. *(Both start up* C.*)* Hurry, Bill!

BILL. *(Starting for the* C. *door)* Yes, honey. *(He pauses to grab* CYRUS' *hand and shake it joyously)* You won't never regret it. (CYRUS *turns head away, tries to place glass on table, and starts to go.* BILL *yanks him back gently with hand.* CYRUS *tries to place glass on table.)* Mr. Bumpsted, I'll do my part, I promise you, and you'll be glad it came out this way. Yes, sir, you will.

CYRUS. *(Vaguely)* Hum—yeah—hum——

BILL. *(Extracting a big cigar from his pocket)* Have a cigar on me, Mr. Bumpsted.

CYRUS. *(Very much pleased)* Why, say, that's mighty nice of you, Bill. Thanks.

BILL. *(With a careless wave of his arm)* That's all right, sir—all right.

ELAINE. *(Opens door)* Bill, you hurry now!

BILL. Yep! You bet! *(He snatches a kiss and dashes out of the door with his coat over his arm.)*

CYRUS. *(Crosses to* C. *door.* ELAINE *crosses to door,* L. *of father. At the door)* Mind that step, Bill; there's ice on it. *(He closes the door and examines the cigar wrapper)* Nice boy, Bill—thoughtful. *(Crosses to* R. *of sofa)* I always liked him, yes, sir. Hum—yes, I bet that's a good cigar. *(And he puts it carefully away in his pocket.* ELAINE *is slipping away quietly up the stairs.)* Where are you going, Elly?

ELAINE. *(Leans over rail, then on up)* Just upstairs.

CYRUS. Say, you haven't forgotten about these dishes, have you?

ELAINE. *(Leans over rail, then up)* I'll be right back.

CYRUS. *(Anxiously)* Well, I know, but look here. Do you know what time it is? It's quarter past nine.

ELAINE. We've got lots of time, Father. Don't worry. *(And she slips quickly out of sight.)*

CYRUS. Shucks! I declare that girl does beat everything. I can't tell if I'm standing on my head or my feet. *(He stares absently at the littered table)* My gracious! I better get that fire started. We can't wash dishes in cold water. *(He hurries toward the kitchen, front of table.)*

SAM GREEN. *(Bounces into the room; crosses* D.C.*)* Saw your light. Thought I'd warm up a bit.

CYRUS. *(Crosses* C. *Heartily)* That's right, Sam; glad you did. Lay off your coat and stand by the fire.

SAM. *(Crosses front sofa to fire. Peeling off his ulster onto sofa)* Five below right now.

CYRUS. *(To table,* R. *of it; then starts for kitchen;* SAM's *speech stops him)* My! You don't say!

SAM. Yes, 'tis. I see a thermometer downtown.

CYRUS. I guess the old river'll be frozen solid tomorrow.

SAM. You could drive a team acrost it now. *(He feels his ears)* How's that ear look? *(Crosses front of sofa to* R.C.*)*

CYRUS. *(*R. *of* SAM*)* Hum! *(Examining the ear)* 'Tain't frozen, Sam.

SAM. Humph! *(He stamps his feet)* Powerful long hike out to that doggone cemetery.

CYRUS. That's right, Sam.

SAM. Ain't your folks got back from the picture show yet?

CYRUS. *(Startled)* My gracious! I was forgetting all about that. *(He looks anxiously at the clock.* SAM *crosses to fireplace, front of sofa, looks at clock. Above table to stairs. Hurrying across and calling up stairs)* Elly!

ELAINE. *(Inaudibly)* Yes, Father?

CYRUS. What on earth you doing up there?

ELAINE. I'm coming in a minute.

CYRUS. Well, we've got no time to waste now.

ELAINE. Just a few moments, Father.

CYRUS. Well, hurry up as fast as you can. *(Crosses* D.R.C., R. *of table. To* SAM *apologetically)* You see we got to get these dishes done up before Jenny gets home.

SAM. Dishes? *(He sniffs disdainfully. Crosses to* C.*)* That's women's work.

CYRUS. *(Meekly)* Yes, I guess that's right.

SAM. I never washed a dish in my life, and don't never aim to.

CYRUS. Some folks are like that. I guess it's the way you get started.

SAM. Humph!

CYRUS. Just excuse me a minute while I get the fire started. I'll be right back.

SAM. Humph! (CYRUS *goes into the kitchen. After a moment* SAM *notices shoestring untied.* SAM

places R. *foot on chair* L. *of table to tie shoestring; notices jug under table. Takes two small steps on* L. *leg, then picks up jug; to front of table, cautiously with one eye on the kitchen door. He removes the cork and sniffs with surprised satisfaction)* Gosh! *(He hesitates and considers the matter. Then picks up a cup and pours out a drink and sips it thoughtfully. Smacking his lips)* Ah!

CYRUS. *(Re-enters. Rushing over and grabbing jug. Places it on table)* My gracious! You mustn't drink that, Sam.

SAM. *(Startled)* Why not?

CYRUS. 'Tain't fit to drink. It's hard.

SAM. *(Incredulously)* Hard?

CYRUS. Yes, siree. I was just going to throw it out. *(Stands* R. *end of table. Places* R. *arm around jug.)*

SAM. *(Both face each other; stands* L. *end of table. Thinking fast)* Why, that cider ain't hard, Cy.

CYRUS. *(Surprised)* 'Tain't?

SAM. No. Why, it's soft as cream.

CYRUS. You don't say? Shucks! *(Lets go of jug)* That's funny. Jenny told me it was hard and she wouldn't have it in the house.

SAM. *(Disdainfully. Sits chair* L. *of table)* Women ain't no judge of cider.

CYRUS. Well, I guess that's right, Sam. I'll just try a drop myself. *(He drinks what's left in* SAM's *cup. Raises* R. *leg into air, slowly bringing it down after drink.* SAM *watches him uneasily as he takes a cautious sip)* My! It does taste powerful strong, though.

SAM. Well, it's crab-apple cider, ain't it?

CYRUS. I declare I don't know. *(Smells cup.)*

SAM. You betcha, that's what it is. *(And he nods his head profoundly.)*

CYRUS. How can you tell?

SAM. *(Loftily)* Why, crab apples always have that kind of a tang to 'em.

CYRUS. That right? *(He sips again.)*

SAM. Always.

CYRUS. *(Takes a critical sip)* 'Tain't bad.

SAM. Bad? Why, Cy, that's the finest cider in the world.

CYRUS. Shucks! Now I'm right glad you told me that before I went and threw it out. *(And he sips again)* It sort of seems to warm you up inside.

SAM. Any good cider'll do that.

CYRUS. *(Sits chair* R. *of table)* I guess I never noticed it before.

SAM. *(Contemptuously)* Why, you don't know no more about cider than a child. *(He hesitates)* And I expect you never did have a drink of hard liquor in your life.

CYRUS. *(A little sheepishly)* No, sir, I don't think I ever did, Sam.

SAM. Humph!

CYRUS. *(Apologetically)* You see, Jenny's always been pretty set against liquor, and we're all teetotalers in this house. Yes, siree, every one of us.

SAM. Humph! (SAM *leans back in chair. Pause.)*

CYRUS. *(Reaching out for the jug.* SAM *leans forward in chair)* I guess we might have a little more of this. *(Pauses; then reaches again.)*

SAM. *(Grimly)* I guess we had enough. *(And he captures the jug, corks it with an air of finality, and removes it to arm's length with a sigh of regret.)*

CYRUS. Just as you say, Sam. *(And he leans back comfortably in his chair. Even a few drops of this twenty-mule-kick cider has a soothing and expanding effect. He cocks his head reflectively)* Nice little town, Milldale.

SAM. *(Without enthusiasm)* Yeah.

CYRUS. Lots of nice folks here.

SAM. Yeah.

CYRUS. I'm right glad to be a citizen of this town. *(Pause)* Money ain't everything, Sam.

SAM. You can't prove it by me.

CYRUS. Well, sir, I tell you, we're better off maybe 'thout it. (CYRUS, *after "Yeah," rises, crosses front of table to* L. *of sofa, nearer fireplace.)*

SAM. *(Non-committally)* Humph!

CYRUS. *(Quite forcefully)* Shucks! You listen to me, Sam Green. (SAM *crosses to* R. *of sofa.)* I'll tell you what: you and me are a couple of lucky fellers. Yes, sir, that's it, just plain lucky. Nice homes and families and good positions and—and members of the community. Yes, sir. (SAM *sits; then* CYRUS *sits)* It's pretty fine, I tell you.

SAM. *(Badly bored)* Oh, yeah!

CYRUS. When J. G. Smedley referred to us all to-night in his speech as members of the community, it just caught me right. *(Rises; crosses front to* C.*)* I tell you, Sam, I never just thought of it that way before. *(Faces* SAM.*)*

SAM. *(Taking a cigar from his pocket)* Have a cigar, Cy.

CYRUS. Much obliged, Sam, but I got a whole pocket full.

SAM. So've I. *(He displays a row in his vest pocket)* I always stock up when they have a shindig at the Lodge. Go ahead. Take one.

CYRUS. Oh, I got plenty!

SAM. Go ahead, I tell you. Put it in your pocket.

CYRUS. *(Crosses to* R. *of* SAM. *Taking the cigar)* Well, all right, if you insist. Thanks. Mighty nice of you, Sam. *(Faces away from* SAM.*)*

SAM. 'Tain't nothing. *(He selects a cigar for himself and bites off the end of it.* CYRUS *is examining the wrapper of his cigar and he does not notice what* SAM *is doing.)*

CYRUS. Hum—looks like a mighty good cigar.

(Studying the label) Calvin Coolidge. Yes, sir, I bet you that's a good cigar. I'll just save that for after dinner, Sunday. *(And he puts it carefully away in his pocket. At this moment he notices that* SAM *has his cigar in his mouth and is striking a match. Crosses to* R. *of* SAM *and blows out match)* Oh, my gracious, Sam!

SAM. *(Startled)* What?

CYRUS. *(Embarrassed)* Well, I'm mighty sorry, but Jenny don't allow no one to smoke in here. *(Takes match from* SAM; *crosses around above sofa; throws it into fireplace.)*

SAM. Oh!

CYRUS. You might step out on the porch.

SAM. *(Glumly)* Too cold.

CYRUS. *(Sadly)* Yes, I guess that's right.

SAM. Don't you ever smoke in the house?

CYRUS. Well, sir, I never have. You see Jenny's right set against the smell of it.

SAM. Humph! *(He gets up. Rises; crosses* C.*)* Guess I better go.

CYRUS. Don't hurry, Sam. *(Turns head away.)*

SAM. It's getting pretty late. *(Sees jug; stops.)*

CYRUS. Late? *(He glances at the clock)* By gracious! That's right. *(He starts for the kitchen. Crosses front)* I clean forgot to put that kettle on. Shucks, now! Ain't that the limit? *(He pauses at the door)* You wait a minute, Sam. I'll be right back. *(And he darts out of the room.)*

(SAM *crosses front to table. After a dismal moment strikes up a flirtation with the cider jug. He draws it to him cautiously; takes out the cork; sniffs at the contents and picks up a cup. At this moment there is a sharp knock on door.)*

(KNOCK.)

"Broken Dishes"

Act II, See Page 62

SAM. *(Vastly startled)* Gosh! *(And he drops the cup, which is shattered on the table)* Oh, gosh!

(KNOCK.)

(The knock is repeated. He gets up and tiptoes toward the kitchen. The C. *door opens and the* REVEREND DR. STUMP *enters, with* BILL *at his heels.)*

BILL. *(At door. In a whisper with the air of a conspirator)* Where's Mr. Bumpsted? *(*SAM *points with his thumb to the kitchen.)* Oh! Where's Elaine? *(*SAM *points his thumb at the ceiling.)* Oh! Her mother ain't got back yet? *(*SAM *shakes his head.)* Oh! *(He turns to* STUMP, *who is beaming pleasantly, and shouts)* You make yourself to home, Dr. Stump. I'll be right back. *(He goes to the stairs and calls)* Elaine!

ELAINE. Yes?

BILL. It's all fixed, honey.

ELAINE. Everything?

BILL. Yes, all ready——

ELAINE. Come on up——

BILL. What's that?

ELAINE. Come up——

BILL. You bet I will. *(And he runs quickly up the stairs.)*

SAM. *(Crosses* L. *to front of table. Suspiciously to no one in particular)* What's going on around here?

STUMP. *(Has divested himself of his coat onto stand* L. *of door* C. *and is squinting his way cautiously toward the fire. Going above sofa, he becomes aware of* SAM *and peers at him closely. Beaming recognition)* Why, it's Samuel Green!

SAM. *(Very gruff)* Yes, 'tis.

STUMP. How do you do, Samuel?

SAM. *(Shouting)* How're you? *(In his natural voice)* Deaf old crow!

STUMP. *(Sitting down by the fire on* L. *of sofa)* How's everything out to the cemetery, Samuel?

SAM. Frozen up tight.

STUMP. That's good. That's good—yes—hum—

SAM. *(Disgustedly)* Darned old fool. *(He shouts. Crosses to* STUMP*)* How come you ain't in bed this time of night?

STUMP. I was preparing for bed, but fortunately I had only removed my coat and shoes. Yes, yes, hum——

SAM. Coat and shoes. Humph! *(A pause)* What's going on around here, anyway?

STUMP. As you say, Samuel. As you say. Hum —yes—— *(And he taps his fingers together and beams ecclesiastically.)*

SAM. 'Tain't no use. Might as well talk to a fence post.

STUMP. What say?

SAM. *(Crosses to* STUMP. *Shouting)* I didn't say nothing.

STUMP. Oh! *(He beams at the fire and* SAM *stares glumly into space. A few moments pass and* CYRUS *returns in great haste from the kitchen.)*

CYRUS. *(As he enters)* Now we'll have that hot water in just a jiffy, and the dishes won't take no time.

SAM. Pst—pst! *(He points to* STUMP*)* Look-a here.

CYRUS. My gracious! Well, I declare, if it isn't Dr. Stump. *(He raises his voice to a shout)* How're you, Dr. Stump? *(Crosses; shakes hands with* STUMP. SAM *crosses around table to* D.R.*)*

STUMP. *(Rising and shaking hands)* Good evening, Brother Bumpsted.

CYRUS. Well, well, this is quite a surprise.

STUMP. It was to me, Brother Bumpsted. It was

to me. Yes—hum. *(And he beams from ear to ear and resumes his seat.)*

CYRUS. *(Vaguely)* My gracious! *(He turns to* SAM. *Crosses to* L. *of* SAM*)* What do you reckon he came for?

SAM. *(Gloomily)* Darned if I know.

CYRUS. Maybe I better ask him.

SAM. 'Tain't no use to ask him nothing. He wouldn't know the war was over if he couldn't read.

CYRUS. Shucks! I guess that's right. *(He stares at* STUMP *helplesssly.)*

SAM. *(Grumbling)* I don't like him anyway! Blind old bat!

CYRUS. Sam, Sam, you oughtn't to speak that way about a preacher.

SAM. I don't like none of 'em—always snooping around the cemetery, watching what I'm doing.

CYRUS. I expect they don't mean no harm.

SAM. Maybe not, but I been digging graves and cutting headstones all my life and I don't need no help from them.

CYRUS. *(Crosses* C.*)* My stars! Look at that clock. I never did know so many things to happen in one evening. Ain't Elaine come down yet? (SAM *shakes his head, and* CYRUS *cracks his finger joints)* The good Lord knows what she's doing! *(Crosses up* C. *to stairs)* I been trying to get her down here for half an hour. Elly! Oh, Elly! *(Her answer is an inaudible, "Yes, Father." He starts upstairs.)*

ELAINE. Don't come up!

CYRUS. Well, now we haven't got any more time for fooling. There's some company down here, too —you hurry. *(He mops his brow. Crosses above table to* C.*)* I declare I don't know what's got into everything.

STUMP. Well, Brother Bumpsted, this is an important evening. Hum—yes.

CYRUS. *(Shouting valiantly)* Yes, sir, it certainly is. That's right. *(He laughs weakly.)*

STUMP. There are few more important occasions in a man's life.

CYRUS. No, sir, I guess that's right. *(He turns to* SAM. *Crosses to* SAM*)* What do you suppose he means? *(Humps his shoulder.* SAM *crosses* D.R. *and back a step.)*

SAM. *(Contemptuously)* He don't mean nothing. He's always carrying on that way.

CYRUS. *(Helplessly)* Yes, but shucks!

STUMP. Are you expecting other guests, Brother Bumpsted?

CYRUS. *(Vaguely. Crosses to* STUMP*)* Well, I hardly reckon so to-night.

STUMP. How's that?

CYRUS. *(Shouting)* No.

STUMP. *(Nodding benignantly)* Just the family and perhaps two or three very intimate friends. *(*CYRUS *and* SAM *look at each other.)* It is after all a solemn occasion, and one in which pomp, ceremony and display are sadly out of place. *(Looks at* CYRUS, *who shakes head up and down three times.)* I am glad to see that you agree with me. Hum—yes. *(Smiles.* CYRUS *nods his head dumbly.)*

SAM. He's wound up now.

CYRUS. *(Turns to* SAM. *Miserably)* I declare, I just can't make sense out of it.

SAM. There ain't no sense in it. There never is.

CYRUS. But, my gracious——

STUMP. As a husband and father I can of course appreciate your feelings. *(He taps his fingers together and stares at the ceiling.)*

CYRUS. *(Desperately)* Yes, sir. *(To* SAM*)* We got to stop him some way!

SAM. *(Crosses* D.R. *a step and back. Irritably)* 'Tain't no use. You couldn't stop him with a steam roller.

CYRUS. Yes, but——

STUMP. We old folks must bend our heads to the inevitable phenomenon of youth, and we must seek our happiness in the more placid and no doubt appropriate pleasures of observation and contemplation. *(He smacks his lips.)*

CYRUS. *(Quite breathlesssly)* My goodness!

STUMP. A lamb is never lost from the fold.

CYRUS. Oh!

STUMP. I remember on a similar occasion using that very verse from the Scriptures to abate the selfish—for it is selfish, Brother Bumpsted—the selfish sorrow of a dear friend.

SAM. *(Crosses step to* CYRUS*)* Maybe he thinks there's somebody dead here.

CYRUS. *(Aghast)* My gracious! I bet that's it. I just bet he's made a mistake and come to the wrong house.

STUMP. I hope you will take satisfaction in that thought, Brother Bumpsted. (CYRUS *looks at* SAM *helplessly.* STUMP *beams complacently.)*

CYRUS. *(With a violent start)* I got to get that hot water. *(He dashes for the kitchen, front of* SAM. *From the threshold)* You tell him, Sam. Tell him it's all a mistake. *(And he disappears* R.*)*

SAM. I'll tell him, don't you fret. *(And he buttons up his coat and advances on* STUMP *with fire in his eye)* The old mule! Hey, there!

STUMP. *(Nodding and beaming)* Yes, Brother Green?

SAM. You got things wrong.

STUMP. What say?

SAM. *(Bellowing)* Ain't nobody dead here!

STUMP. *(Cupping his ear)* Dead? Did you say dead? *(Smiles.)*

SAM. That's right, dead.

STUMP. *(Has decided that* SAM *is being humorous)* Brother Green, I should think not. He—he—

he—— *(Rises; crosses to fire.* SAM *retreats in confusion up to window-seat. At this moment* CYRUS *returns from the kitchen with the teakettle in his hand, to chair* R. *of table.* ELAINE *appears on stairs. She is all in white and a very pretty bride, flushed and excited.* BILL *follows her.)*

(READY Lights Off L.*)*

CYRUS. My stars! *(He puts the kettle down on the table and stares at them)* What you doing up there, Bill Clark?

BILL. *(Stammering)* I—I had to hook up her dress.

CYRUS. Hook? Hook up her dress? (STUMP *has risen and is beaming and chirping.)* But you went home. What'd you come back here for?

BILL. I didn't come back.

CYRUS. You didn't come back?

BILL. No, sir. You see I didn't go.

CYRUS. *(Stupefied)* Well, I—— Shucks! I just don't know what's going on around here.

BILL. It's going to be all right, Mr. Bumpsted. Everything's going to be all right. *(Crosses to* STUMP. ELAINE *follows him to his* R. SAM *crosses around table to* D.R., R. *of* CYRUS.*)*

CYRUS. All right? *(He groans)* Well, that's one way of looking at it. *(Irritably)* Elaine!

ELAINE. Yes, Father?

CYRUS. *(Pointing at* BILL*)* What's he doing here? What'd you want to go and change your dress for, anyway?

ELAINE. I'll tell you all about it, dear.

CYRUS. No, you better not. I don't want to know. It takes too much time. We got to get at those dishes.

ELAINE. *(Crosses back to* BILL'S R. *Radiantly)* Yes, Father.

CYRUS. *(To* SAM*)* Why don't Dr. Stump go away? Didn't you tell him?

SAM. Yes, I did, and he just laughed at me.

CYRUS. Laughed?

SAM. Like a jay bird.

CYRUS. Well, I declare I just can't do anything about that. *(To* ELAINE, *who is talking aside with* BILL*)* Elaine, you get your apron and come here. *(And he picks up the kettle and begins to pour the water into the dishpan.)*

ELAINE. *(Crosses to* C.*)* Yes, Father. *(To* BILL*)* You go in the parlor, Bill, and light the lights.

(LIGHTS No. 6.*)*

BILL. Yes, honey. *(And he dashes into the parlor.)*

CYRUS. *(Putting down the teakettle with a gasp)* The parlor?

ELAINE. Why, yes, of course, Father. Where else would I be married?

CYRUS. *(Clutching at the table for support)* What?

ELAINE. *(Crosses to* L. *of chair* L. *of table)* That's where I'm going to be married.

CYRUS. Married?

ELAINE. Of course, dear. Haven't you figured that out yet? (CYRUS, *who is actually choking, gives utterance to some unintelligible sounds.)* Why do you suppose I'm dressed like this? Why do you suppose Dr. Stump is here? (SAM *mouth agape and eyes like teacups.)*

CYRUS. *(Faintly)* Is—is that what he come for?

ELAINE. Certainly.

CYRUS. *(Pleading)* You ain't joking me, Elly.

ELAINE. No, Father.

CYRUS. *(Trying very hard to make his voice sound firm)* Well, you can't do it, Elly. You can't do it. *(He wrings his hands.)*

ELAINE. *(With tightening lips)* I'm going to do it, Father.

CYRUS. *(Frantically)* You can't! You can't! We'd

never have another peaceful day. You've gone out of your head. You tell Dr. Stump, Elly, you tell him it's all a mistake.

ELAINE. *(Her voice is quavering dangerously)* No! Father, no!

CYRUS. I'll have to tell him myself. *(And he starts toward* STUMP.*)*

ELAINE. *(Hysterically; she stops him)* You said you'd help me.

CYRUS. Yes, but—— *(He hesitates and passes a trembling hand over his forehead.)*

ELAINE. You promised me.

CYRUS. *(Clutching at a chair back for support)* Oh, my gracious! Shucks! I did promise you. Yes, that's right. But I didn't understand, Elly.

ELAINE. *(Half crying from the strain)* You wouldn't go back on your word, Father. You couldn't do that.

(BILL *enters* L.; *front of sofa and* STUMP *to fire.)*

CYRUS. I never went back on my word, Elly—never!

ELAINE. *(Kisses father)* You darling! I knew you wouldn't. I'm so happy, Father. So happy. (ELAINE *crosses* C.*)*

CYRUS. And what about these dishes?

ELAINE. Dishes?

CYRUS. Couldn't we get them done up first, Elly?

ELAINE. Oh, no, dear. There isn't time.

CYRUS. My stars—— *(Crosses to chair* L. *of table and sits)* I guess I'm in for it.

BILL. *(*L. *of* ELAINE*)* You won't never regret it, Mr. Bumpsted.

CYRUS. Well, what are we waiting for? *(Desperately)* We got to hurry. Yes, sir, we got to hurry before your mother comes back.

ELAINE. Yes, Father. (ELAINE *and* BILL *cross*

to STUMP, *who crosses* D.L. ELAINE R. *of* BILL. BILL R. *of* STUMP.)

BILL. *(Shouting at* STUMP*)* We're all ready now.

STUMP. Ah, yes! Hum—— *(He squints about the room)* But where is your dear mother, Elaine?

ELAINE. *(Taken aback)* Oh! *(She stammers)* She—she isn't home.

STUMP. What say?

CYRUS. *(Shouting)* She's sick abed.

SAM. Oh, my gosh!

ELAINE. *(Crosses* C.*)* Father!

STUMP. Sick abed! Dear me! I hope it's nothing serious.

CYRUS. *(Taking a deep breath)* It's measles.

STUMP. Measles? (CYRUS *nods violently.)*

ELAINE. *(A step to* CYRUS*)* Father, how could you?

CYRUS. Well—my gracious! I had to say something, Elly.

STUMP. It does seem very irregular to proceed without Sister Bumpsted.

CYRUS. *(Defiantly)* I'm her father, ain't I?

STUMP. Oh, yes! Of course, Brother Bumpsted. I only meant——

CYRUS. *(Quite savagely)* Well, then, proceed.

STUMP. *(Staring at* CYRUS *in some surprise)* Certainly, certainly. But stop! We shall require a witness.

ELAINE. Is that necessary?

STUMP. Essential.

CYRUS. Sam can be the witness.

SAM. No, I can't. I got to go. *(Crosses front of table.* CYRUS *stops him.)*

CYRUS. *(Intercepting him)* No. You wait.

SAM. *(Around* R. *of table to door* C.*)* I got to go, I tell you. Leave loose of me.

CYRUS. *(Crosses* U.C. *Stops* C. CYRUS *on his* L.*)* No, you can't. Not now.

SAM. I got to.

CYRUS. You can't.

SAM. I hadn't ought to.

ELAINE. But just to please me.

SAM. *(Wavering)* Well——

CYRUS. I knew old Sam'd see it through. *(Turns to* BILL. *In great haste)* Bill, you take Dr. Stump in the parlor. We're all ready now. *(Crosses* C.*)*

BILL. Yes, sir. *(And he speaks to* STUMP *and leads him into the parlor.)*

ELAINE. I wish we had some kind of music.

CYRUS. *(Beginning to enter into the spirit of occasion)* Shucks! That's right. Nobody ever heard of a wedding without music. By jingoes! I forgot. Sam can play the organ.

SAM. *(Bashfully)* No, I can't.

CYRUS. Yes, he can.

ELAINE. *(Crosses* C.*)* Oh, please, Mr. Green!

SAM. *(Not very loathe)* Well—— *(And he goes over to the melodeon by going around* R. *of table)* What'll I play?

ELAINE. Anything. It doesn't matter. (SAM *crosses around* R. *of table to organ.)*

BILL. *(From the parlor door)* All ready in here. *(Pause.* CYRUS *and* ELAINE *are nervous and excited.)*

ELAINE. All right. You stand there by the door. I'll march in with Father. *(They look at each other.)*

CYRUS. *(Excited)* That's it, Elly. That's the way they do it. He has to wait for you there. Understand, Bill?

(READY STUMP *Prays* L.*)*

BILL. *(Nervously)* Yes, sir. Yes, sir. I'm waiting.

(SAM *begins to play with infinite effort a distorted dirge which is reminiscent of "Nearer My God to Thee.")*

CYRUS. *(Scratching his head)* My gracious! That'll never do. *(Crosses up* C., R. *of* SAM. ELAINE *crosses up to* R. *of* CYRUS.*)* Sam!

SAM. *(The music stops)* Yeah?

CYRUS. Can't you give us something a little more cheerful?

SAM. Well, I know one other one.

CYRUS. *(Hesitates. Looks at* ELAINE. *She nods. He nods)* Let's have it. *(To* ELAINE*)* You stand right there on the stairs, Elaine. *(He passes her to stairs)* And when I say "now," you come down and we'll march right into the parlor together.

ELAINE. Yes, Father. *(She goes upstairs. At this moment* SAM *begins a labored attack on "Onward Christian Soldiers.")*

SAM. How's that, Cy?

CYRUS. That's fine, Sam. Just fine. Keep her going till we get out of sight. Now!

(BILL *faces front at* D.L. ELAINE *comes down slowly. When she reaches him he crooks his* R. *arm. She puts her arm through his and together with serious mien and measured step they march slowly to the parlor door, where* BILL *awaits them.)*

ELAINE. Father!

CYRUS. Yes, Elly?

ELAINE. You've been just wonderful.

CYRUS. Shucks!

ELAINE. I won't ever forget.

CYRUS. There, there, Elly. Everything is going to be all right.

ELAINE. *(Tremulously)* You—you won't let anything—or—or anybody interrupt us now, Father?

CYRUS. Don't you worry, Elly. *(Kisses her.* BILL *a step* D.S., *back to audience. She takes her arm from her father's and slips it into* BILL'S. *They*

march into the parlor and CYRUS *follows them with firm and measured tread.* SAM *continues to pound the melodeon with all his heart and soul. A few moments pass and* CYRUS *darts back into the room)* Sam—Sam!

(STUMP *Prays Off* L. *Quietly.)*

SAM. *(Crosses down to* L. *of* CYRUS*)* Gosh! (CYRUS *starts to sit on sofa.)* Look-a here, Cy. You ain't sick, are you?

CYRUS. Well, I feel kind of faint.

SAM. *(Pausing at door)* Say, suppose your folks come home. *(Rises; crosses to chair* L. *of table.)*

CYRUS. *(With a violent start)* My stars!

SAM. Likely to get here any minute now.

CYRUS. Shucks! That's right. *(He staggers faintly.* SAM *crosses around above table to* R. *of it. Pours drink.)* You see, Sam, there's so blame many things happened.

(STUMP *Praying Off* L.)

SAM. Yeah. (STUMP's *voice becomes audible now in droning prayer.)*

CYRUS. What they doing in there?

SAM. The old buzzard's saying his prayers.

CYRUS. My! I hope it don't take long.

SAM. Just depends on how he feels. Sometimes he'll carry on that way for an hour.

CYRUS. *(Aghast)* My gracious!

SAM. Here! Drink that! *(And while he gulps down his own,* CYRUS *sips and chokes.)*

CYRUS. Them crab apples certainly give it some tang. *(And he drinks again.)*

SAM. Yeah.

CYRUS. *(Smacking his lips and squaring his shoulders)* Sure does brace a feller up, though.

SAM. Yeah.

CYRUS. I'm all right now. Just fine. *(Rises)* You go in there and try to hurry them up. I'll stay here on guard.

SAM. Yeah. *(He goes into parlor.)*

CYRUS. *(Nodding amiably to himself)* Mighty good thing I didn't throw that cider out. Yes, sir. *(He drains his cup and coughs and stamps his feet)* My, that tang is powerful.

(The C. *door is opened. A stranger stands upon the threshold.)*

CHESTER. *(At door)* I beg your pardon. I'm awfully sorry to disturb you this time of night.

CYRUS. *(Crosses* L. *of* CHESTER; *brings him* D.C.; *crosses front of him to table)* Shucks now, that's all right, all right. *(Waving aside the explanation)* We're having a little wedding here tonight.

CHESTER. Oh, really?

CYRUS. Yes, sir, that's all. Have a little cider, Mister?

CHESTER. Really, no, thank you.

CYRUS. 'Tain't hard—it's just that crabapple tang.

CHESTER. No, really.

CYRUS. Well, have a cigar.

CHESTER. It's awfully good of you, but I don't smoke cigars.

CYRUS. Shucks, that's all right. Just put it in your pocket, then.

CHESTER. *(A little nervously)* Well—er—thank you. *(Doubtfully)* I've had trouble with my car—a tire flat, you see, and then I saw your light. I thought if I could find a place to put my car and——

CYRUS. Car! Yes, sir, you bet. Right back there in the barn. *(He points out through kitchen.)*

CHESTER. Thank you. *(Ready to cross.* CHESTER *starts up* C.*)*

CYRUS. Come, right through the kitchen.

CHESTER. Thank you. *(Exits to kitchen.* CYRUS

takes another drink and walks again toward the sofa and stands once again blissfully beaming.)

CYRUS. Nice little town, Milldale. Yes, sir. You bet. Hum—hum—— Members of the community—of the community—something to that, I tell you—— Yes, sir, something to that. *(A pause)* Nice boy, Bill—fine boy, yes, sir. They're going to get along all right. *(A pause)* Shucks! Guess a little smoke wouldn't go bad right now. Hum. *(He takes several cigars from his pocket and studies the bands)* Calvin Coolidge, that's the one. I bet that's a good cigar. (STUMP'S *voice: "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" Three times.* CYRUS *weaves his way back to the table, throws cloth above dishes, lights the cigar, and flicks the match into the dishpan with a fine gesture of abandon)* Yes, sir, that's a good cigar. *(At* C.*)*

SAM. *(Sticking his head into the room)* Pst! Pst!

CYRUS. *(Starting violently)* My gracious!

SAM. *(In a hoarse whisper)* He wants you to come in. You got to give the bride away.

CYRUS. Shucks! Now I forgot all about that—that's right, Sam. Yes, sir, that's right. *(And smiling with amiable benevolence he weaves a crooked pathway into the parlor and closes the door behind him.)*

(A few moments pass, and JENNY, *followed by* MABEL *and* MYRA, *comes in* C. MABEL *runs to the fire by going above sofa. The others remove their wraps.)*

MYRA. *(At organ stool)* Didn't you love that part, Mother, where the girl was captured by the Arab chieftain?

JENNY. *(Grudgingly, sitting on sofa)* 'Twasn't bad.

MABEL. I wouldn't like living on coffee and dates.

MYRA. With a man like that I wouldn't care. He made me think of Chester Armstrong, Mother.

JENNY. Well, I don't know but what—— *(She breaks off abruptly to sniff the air. All sniff the air.)* There's been tobacco smoke in here. *(She glances about and calls sharply)* Cyrus! Cyrus! *(She goes to the kitchen door.* MYRA *crosses to stairs; looks up.* MABEL *crosses above sofa to* L. *of table.)* Cyrus! That's funny. *(She goes to the stairs and calls.* MYRA *crosses to chair* R. *of table.)* Elaine!

MYRA. *(Gazing at the table. Surprised and injured)* Why, Mother, the dishes haven't even been done!

JENNY. What? *(She comes back from the stairs to* C.; *takes off coat.)*

MYRA. Well, only look!

MABEL. *(Crosses to* L. *of table. Poking about the table)* And two of the egg-shell china cups are smashed to bits.

JENNY. *(Gasping) What?*

MABEL. *(Holding up the fragments)* Look!

JENNY. *(Faintly)* My land! Get my apron out of the kitchen, Mabel.

MABEL. Yes, Mother. *(She hurries to the kitchen.)*

MYRA. Oh! And here are all the bone-handled knives soaking in the dishpan. *(She fishes out one and holds it up for inspection.)*

JENNY. *(Crosses* L., L. *of table.* MYRA *crosses back of table. Reeling)* Oh!

MABEL. *(Returning to* D.R.*)* Here's the apron, but it's ruined, Mother—simply ruined.

JENNY. Ruined?

MABEL. Just look at it. *(And she holds it up.)*

JENNY. Great grief!

MYRA. *(Who has stumbled on the fragments of the vase)* Oh, my goodness, Mother!

JENNY. Well, what is it, now?

MYRA. *(Breathless)* Look! The vase!

JENNY. What vase?

MYRA. The vase Aunt Esther gave you. Look!

JENNY. Oh, my! *(And she sits down abruptly, chair C. of table, and stares at the fragments of this cherished monstrosity)* I—I declare I can't believe my eyes.

MABEL. *(Who has been doing some detective work at the table)* Mother!

JENNY. *(Frantically)* My land! What is it now?

MABEL. *(Breathlessly)* Oh, look here! Just look here!

JENNY. What? What? *(She staggers to her feet.)*

MYRA. *(Aghast)* Oh! Oh! *(For* MABEL *is pointing out with thrilled and pleasant horror the corkless and depleted cider jug and the dregs of cider in a cup, and wet stains on the cloth which eager eyes and noses can easily classify. They murmur comprehending "ohs" and "ahs.")*

JENNY. Yes—yes, I see.

(CYRUS *enters* L., *supporting himself with caution through the door. He has a silly smile upon his face and the cigar is tilted from the corner of his mouth.* MYRA *sees him.)*

MYRA. *Mother—look!*

JENNY. Oh! *(The girls huddle at her back.)*

CYRUS. *(Gasping and reeling back against the framing of the door)* My stars! *(And he snatches the cigar from his mouth and hides it behind his back.)*

JENNY. *(Rises; in a terrifying voice)* Cyrus Bumpsted!

CYRUS. *(Crosses to front of sofa. Vaguely placating and very thickly)* Now don't you worry, Jenny—everything's going to be all right. Yes, sir.

JENNY. *(Crosses* C. *to him. Furiously)* You! You! You've been drinking.

CYRUS. *(With an injured air of innocence)* Drinking? Me? *(He laughs foolishly)* Only cider, Jenny.

JENNY. *(Backs a step. Speechless)* Ugh! Ugh!

(And now behind him in the doorway are BILL, R. *of* ELAINE; *back of them is* SAM, *to above sofa, sheepish, and scared, and desperately anxious to escape attention. The* REVEREND STUMP *to door* D.L. *brings up the rear, beaming and nodding in the most ecclesiastical of fashions.)*

MABEL *and* MYRA. *(Back a step. Shrilly)* Oh! Oh! Oh! *(And* JENNY *reels to the support of a chair back with a gasped and unintelligible exclamation.)*

CYRUS. *(Swaying dangerously)* Whew! Whew!

BILL. *(Catches* CYRUS; *seats him on* R. *of sofa)* Steady, Mr. Bumpsted! *(Then crosses back to* L. *of* ELAINE.*)*

MYRA. They're married.

MABEL. I knew she'd do it.

CYRUS. Where's Sam?

SAM. *(At* R. *of door* C., *slipping along the wall)* I got to be going now.

JENNY. *(C. with her first full breath)* You wait! Sam Green!

SAM. *(Very meekly)* Yes, ma'am. *(Crosses to landing of stairs.)*

JENNY. *(Facing* ELAINE; *bitterly)* So you're married, are you?

ELAINE. *(A step forward to* R. *of* BILL.*)* Yes. Mother.

JENNY. All right. You've ruined your life and you've broken my heart, that's all.

ELAINE. *(Pleading)* Mother—— (JENNY *moves away from the girl's outstretched arms.)*

BILL. *(L. of* ELAINE*)* If you'd only give me a chance, Mrs. Bumpsted——

JENNY. I've nothing to say to you and I don't want you to say anything to me. I don't want to see you again—not ever.

(WARN Curtain.)

ELAINE. Mother—please——

JENNY. *(Brushing her aside)* Don't you never put your foot inside this house again, William Clark —never—you understand?

CYRUS. *(Rises. Advancing suddenly with reeling steps and flushed face and very wild eyes)* Shucks! Don't you pay no attention to her, Bill.

JENNY. *(White with fury)* You shut your mouth, you—you—drunken sot!

CYRUS. *(Fairly shrieking)* I ain't!

JENNY. You are!

CYRUS. I ain't no such a thing. You—you ought to be ashamed.

JENNY. God knows I'm ashamed I ever married you.

CYRUS. Yes, I know—I know. And I don't care nothing about Chester Armstrong neither. Not that —not that—— *(He tries to snap his fingers.)*

JENNY. *(Gasping)* Oh!

CYRUS. I never see him. Nobody ever sees him. I don't believe there's any such feller. *(He screams)* And I don't give a gosh damn about him anyway—not a gosh da——

(CHESTER *comes in from the kitchen.)*

MYRA. *(Grasping her mother's sleeve. Shrilly)* Oh! Oh! Mother! *(Everyone turns to look. The stranger has advanced a step into the room, from* D.R. *He smiles most amiably; takes off his hat.)*

CHESTER. I beg your pardon. *(Pause.)* My name is Chester Armstrong.

(General and complete confusion with CYRUS *collapsing onto sofa.)*

FAST CURTAIN

ACT III

Full lights on same as previous Acts. Clock set half hour past time curtain rang down last act.

CYRUS *on sofa, asleep.* ELAINE, *behind sofa, changes towels on his head, then crosses front to kitchen.*

SAM. *(Voice off stage)* He ain't said nothing about Hoover. He's talking about oil wells—Old Walrus. He don't hear nothing, Mister.

(Enter CHESTER *and* STUMP *together* L. CHESTER *crosses to* C. STUMP *to his* L. SAM *enters to above* L. *of sofa.)*

STUMP. Yes, yes. I must go really. It's very late for me. But it's been such a delightful privilege to meet this dear friend of the family who arrived so—er—opportunely for the—er—giving in marriage. (CHESTER *motions* STUMP *not to speak so loudly.* STUMP *lowers voice)* Yes. Hmm. The hand of Providence, Brother Armstrong, yes—I feel sure the hand of Providence.

CHESTER. *(Suppressing a chuckle)* It's been a pleasure and a privilege to meet you, Doctor. And now may I offer you a little present for your church? *(He has a yellow-back in his hand and he waves it suggestively.)*

STUMP. *(Cupping his ear)* What say? What say?

CHESTER. *(Shouting)* A present—a present for your church.

SAM. Oh, gosh!

STUMP. *(Transported) Oh,* a present! *(And he pounces on the bill)* Thank you, thank you, Brother Armstrong, thank you. The hand of Providence! I knew it. I felt it. *(He stows the bill deeply in his pocket)* For our foreign mission, Brother—the heathen in the distant land. *(Shakes hands with* CHESTER; *crosses up* C.; *gets coat; puts it on.)*

SAM. *(Savagely)* If any heathen ever gets a smell of that, my name ain't Green. *(Crosses to* C. *by going around* L. *of sofa.)*

STUMP. What say, Samuel?

SAM. I didn't say nothing. *(Crosses to* STUMP; *crosses past him to window.* STUMP *beams and nods.)* Danged old goat.

STUMP. My coat. Thank you. (SAM *helps* STUMP *with coat.* MYRA *enters on stairs.)* Such a happy evening! *(Crosses* D.C.) My heart is full—full to overflowing for the dear young people and the proud and happy parents. *(Pauses to see effect as if preaching)* Good night—good night—— *(He backs out of* C. *door.)*

SAM. *(Putting on coat at* R. *of sofa, looks at* CYRUS, *then)* Well, I guess I better be going. *(Crosses to door* C.*)*

CHESTER. Hmm—yes—well, good night, my friend—good night.

SAM. Good night. *(Exits.* MYRA *crosses down from stairs to above table to* R. *of sofa.)*

CHESTER. *(Rises)* I hope your father isn't ill.

MYRA. Oh, no, Mr. Armstrong.

CHESTER. *(Smiles and looks around)* Amazing,

isn't it—extraordinary, that I should have blundered into your mother's house!

MYRA. *(Crosses to* L. *of table. Soulfully)* I think it is wonderful!

CHESTER. Your mother was an old sweetheart of mine, my dear.

MYRA. Yes, yes. I know.

CHESTER. *(Sitting near the table)* Well, well, after all these years—*(Crosses* D.R.*)*—after all these years! *(Crosses back front of table. He lights a cigarette)* You see, I was on my way to investigate some properties I own—oil wells in the West. My chauffeur was taken ill this morning. (MYRA *nods, greatly impressed.)* It turned out to be—*(He hesitates)*—appendicitis. (MYRA *says, "Oh!")* I was obliged to leave him in the hospital, back there. (MYRA *says, "Oh!" He waves his arm vaguely)* I thought I'd take a chance on going on without him. (MYRA *nods again.)* Then I must have missed the road. Got off the highway, don't you see. *(He hesitates again and asks rather anxiously)* The highway isn't near here, is it?

MYRA. Oh, no.

CHESTER. *(A faint sigh of relief)* Through traffic doesn't hit this town, does it?

MYRA. Oh, no, Mr. Armstrong.

CHESTER. *(Relieved)* Well—humm—and then, let's see—well, it got dark and then my tire blew out. The rest you know.

MYRA. I think it's just too wonderful! *(A pause)* I hope you'll stay and visit us a while, Mr. Armstrong.

CHESTER. Eh?

MYRA. Mother wants you to.

CHESTER. Well, now, that's very nice of you, my dear. It's not quite the proper season for motoring, is it?

MYRA. Oh, no, of course not.

CHESTER. It's quite a treat to an old bachelor, I tell you, to spend a few days in a good, old-fashioned home.

JENNY. *(Upstairs, off)* Myra—Myra!

MYRA. Yes, Mother. Excuse me, Mr. Armstrong. *(She goes up the stairs around above table. He goes to the window and looks anxiously out behind the shade, then goes to the fireplace, takes a number of papers from his pocket, hastily tears them up, puts them in pocket.* MYRA, *returning, interrupts his occupation)* Mother wishes you to be seated in the parlor, Mr. Armstrong. *(She crosses the room and opens the door.)*

CHESTER. Well, really, I am very comfortable in here.

MYRA. *(She looks at him, then at her father)* Mother thought you'd be more comfortable in the parlor.

CHESTER. Oh, very well, of course. It's rather cold in there.

MYRA. Oh, no, Mr. Armstrong. I lit the fire.

CHESTER. Oh, thank you. *(He exits slowly* L. *and* MYRA *closes the door just as* MABEL *comes in from the kitchen.)*

MABEL. *(Loudly)* Myra——

MYRA. Oh—sh! Father's asleep.

MABEL. I thought you were taking care of Mother?

MYRA. I am—I mean I was. She's better now.

MABEL. What upset her so? *(She nibbles at a slab of cake.)*

MYRA. *(Crosses to* L. *of table)* Well, good grief, Mabel, wouldn't you be upset too if he came back after all these years?

MABEL. Oh, I don't know.

MYRA. *(Dreamily)* He's in the parlor—I lit the fire.

MABEL. What for?

MYRA. Mother said to. You can't tell what might come of a thing like that.

MABEL. *(Sits front of table on table)* Like what?

MYRA. I mean just a little thing like a tire blowing out. It—it might change all our lives.

MABEL. Isn't he married?

MYRA. No.

MABEL. Well, Mother is. *(And she yawns.)*

MYRA. He never married. It—it's just like a moving picture story.

(ELAINE *comes in from the kitchen with a towel in her hand and crosses to* R. *of couch.)*

MABEL. *(Crosses around* R. *of table to stairs)* Well, I'm going to bed.

MYRA. He's going to stay and visit us a while.

ELAINE. What?

MYRA. *(To* ELAINE*)* He said he would.

MABEL. That means more housework.

MYRA. I declare, you haven't a single spark of romance in you, Mabel.

MABEL. Humph—I need my sleep. *(And she goes up the stairs.)*

JENNY. *(Upstairs off)* Myra——

MYRA. Yes, Mother. Coming. (MYRA *goes out upstairs.* ELAINE *crosses to* L. *of couch; front of it; takes the towel from her father's head and arranges another one upon his brow. He moves and groans.)*

ELAINE. *(Softly)* Father, Father! Don't you think you'd better go upstairs?

CYRUS. *(Faintly)* Upstairs? Is that you talking, Elly? I—I've been away off somewhere, yes, sir. Well, now—— *(He struggles slowly to a sitting posture with her assistance and gazes stupidly about.* ELAINE *has right knee on sofa. He sways and chuckles at her hand)* I must have been asleep, I guess, Elly.

ELAINE. Yes, Father.

CYRUS. Yes, sir, that's just what I did. I must've gone to sleep. *(He blinks his eyes and looks about and then begins to laugh a little faintly.)*

ELAINE. *(Sits)* What is it, Father?

CYRUS. *(Chuckles)* I had the funniest dream I ever had in all my life.

ELAINE. *(Laughing also)* What, Father?

CYRUS. Now you'll laugh, Elly, when I tell you. *(She holds his hand and smiles at him)* I dreamt that fellow came here, Elly, right to our house.

ELAINE. *(Tremulously)* Yes.

CYRUS. Yes, sir, that's right. He came right in here, Elly. Why, I'd have known him anywhere. He looked just like your mother always said he did—black hair, and black moustache, and diamond rings, and everything.

ELAINE. *(Gulping back a sob)* Oh!

CYRUS. Shucks, I'm glad it was only a dream. *(He shakes his head)* I guess if that fellow ever really put his foot in here we'd have to get out. *(He chuckles again)* I guess I can get through most anything when you're around to help me, Elly. Shucks, well, I'm glad it was a dream. *(He stands up cautiously and looks around, and his eyes fall on the table and the dishes)* My stars, there's those doggone dishes! I thought maybe I dreamt about them too, but, shucks, they're real. *(He moves toward the table, rolling up sleeves.)*

ELAINE. *(Rises; crosses to* L. *of* CYRUS*)* Father.

CYRUS. Yes, Elly?

ELAINE. It—it wasn't a dream, Father.

CYRUS. What's that?

ELAINE. He did come, Father—he's right here in this house. (CYRUS *backing away.)* I never thought we'd see him, Father. I wasn't sure that he *was* at all, but—well—he's here, that's all, he's here. His car is out there in the barn.

CYRUS. *(Drearily to himself)* Shucks, now I remember that—about his car, I mean.

ELAINE. They're tidying up the spare room for him now.

CYRUS. *(Aghast)* You mean he's come to stay?

ELAINE. He's come for something, Father. I don't know what. I wish I did. *(She breaks off, pondering to herself.)*

CYRUS. *(Stands weakly by a chair beside the table* L. *of table)* By goodness, now—that—that kind of takes my breath away.

ELAINE. I'm sorry, Father, oh, so sorry.

CYRUS. Now don't you worry, Elly. It isn't your fault.

ELAINE. Yes, yes, it is—yes—everything!

CYRUS. No, siree, not a bit! *(He pats her hand; crosses to* U.L. *corner of table, then down to* R. *of chair* L. *of table)* I'm glad it happened, Elly, just like it did. You've a right to marry Bill and you—you're going to get along all right.

ELAINE. Mother won't give us a moment's peace now, Father.

CYRUS. You and Bill can go away.

ELAINE. And leave you here? I wouldn't do a thing like that—not now, Father.

CYRUS. Shucks, don't you worry about me, Elly. Everything's goin' to be all right, some way, somehow. Yes, sir—you bet——

(BILL *enters* C.)

ELAINE. Why, Bill—— (CYRUS *crosses to kitchen.)* Where are you going, Father?

CYRUS. I guess the fire's out and there's that dog-gone cider. I better throw it out. *(Takes jug; exits to kitchen.)*

BILL. Elaine—— *(Crosses around to* ELAINE*)* Honey! *(He folds her in his arms)* Gee, but it

seems like I'd been away from you a year! *(He is fairly bursting with happiness and excitement)* I got a room for us in the hotel, the best room in the house—*(Crosses to window; takes off hat and coat)* —the bridal suite, they call it. Gee, it's swell!

ELAINE. *(Following him to his* R. *Gasping)* Bill! *(Crosses to* R. *of organ stool.)*

BILL. You bet. Wait till you see it, honey. They said they'd trust me for it. That's pretty decent, eh? I signed the register and everything. Mr. and Mrs. William Clark. Gee!

ELAINE. *(Choking)* Bill!

BILL. *(Staring at her)* Why, you haven't even changed your dress, Elaine. You can't go out like that.

ELAINE. *(Tremulously)* I—I've been taking care of Father.

BILL. I see.

ELAINE. He's better now, but—— *(She falters.)*

BILL. *(Vaguely alarmed)* But what?

ELAINE. I—I can't leave him now.

BILL. *What!*

ELAINE. Not now. Oh! Don't you see? Bill! Please!

BILL. *(Staggered)* But—but I've got the bridal suite for us and—and everything.

ELAINE. I know, dear—I—I'm sorry. *(Her voice breaks.)*

BILL. But, honey, you're my wife. We're married, don't you see. You can't change that.

ELAINE. I don't want to change it, Bill. I wouldn't change it for the world.

BILL. *(Dully)* Well—then——

ELAINE. It's just my father, Bill. He's crushed and broken, and it's all my fault what happened here to-night—— *(Pause.)*

BILL. Oh! *(Sits on organ stool.)*

ELAINE. —And then that man came. There's no

one to stand up for Father but me—no one to help him, Bill. *(A pause. Pleadingly)* Don't you see?

BILL. You mean you want to go on living here?

ELAINE. I must.

BILL. Oh! *(He ponders through a pause)* And what about me, honey?

ELAINE. *(Tremulously)* We—we can go on just as we have been for—for a while.

BILL. You in your home and me in mine?

ELAINE. *(Almost inaudibly)* Yes, Bill. I don't see any other way.

BILL. *(He nods to himself; rises; crosses* C., *his shoulders square and a firm note in his voice.* ELAINE *crosses to his* R.*)* No. That won't do, Elaine. I couldn't do that, honey. I'm sorry for your father, too. I guess he and your mother just got started off wrong some way. I guess a lot depends on how you start. We've got to start off right, and—and it wouldn't be right—that way.

ELAINE. *(Alarmed)* Bill!

BILL. I—I might get like your father some day if —if I got started wrong.

ELAINE. Bill!

BILL. *(He comes over to her and puts his arms around her. Very gently)* Come on, honey. Change your dress and pack your things.

ELAINE. *(Looking bravely up into his eyes)* I can't leave Father now.

BILL. You must, Elaine.

ELAINE. I can't.

BILL. Do you love me, honey?

ELAINE. *(Tremulously)* You know I do, Bill. *(He presses a long kiss on her lips and then releases her, crosses front of sofa* L. *of door and picks up his cap and coat.)*

BILL. I'm going to pack my things. I'll be back here in half an hour.

ELAINE. But I'm not going, dear.

BILL. And I'm not going to stay here in this town without you.

ELAINE. *(Crosses to his* L. *Alarmed)* What do you mean?

BILL. I couldn't stay here now without you. I'd only be a joke to everyone and to myself.

ELAINE. *(Wailing)* But you don't understand, Bill.

(READY Motor.)

BILL. *(Firmly but gently)* Yes. Yes, I do. Maybe you ought to stay here with your father. That's up to you. You've got to make your mind up about that. But—*(A pause)*—we can't start out that way. It would be better not to start at all.

ELAINE. *(Choking)* Bill!

BILL. I'm sorry, honey—*(Pause; goes to* C. *door)* but you've got to make a choice. *(He hesitates a moment, opens the door quickly and goes out.)*

ELAINE. *(Pause; quietly)* Bill!

(CHESTER ARMSTRONG *comes in from the parlor* L., *smiling, urbane, chuckling softly to himself. Crosses to her* L. ELAINE *turns quickly toward the stairs.)*

CHESTER. I beg your pardon—I hope I'm not intruding—but well,—it's pretty cold in there. *(He turns to door* L., *then back. Expansively)* So—this is the little bride. Well, well! *(She turns and faces him. He takes a few steps toward her)* Charming! The prettiest girl I've seen since your mother was a girl, my dear. *(She stares at him, white-lipped, her hands clenched at her sides.)* Permit me to wish you great happiness, my child. Er—hum—— *(Her frozen gaze is disconcerting to him and he stumbles)* Will you accept a belated wedding gift? *(He takes from his pocket a big roll of yellow bills.)*

ELAINE. *(Shuddering, hoarsely)* No. No, thank you.

CHESTER. *(Peeling a bill from the roll)* Now, now, don't say no. Just a trifling, friendly gift to Jenny's little girl. *(He holds the money out)* It's only a hundred dollars. Buy something pretty for yourself.

ELAINE. *(Backing away, her hands behind her back)* No.

CHESTER. *(Following her but somewhat disconcerted)* But, my dear child, I want you to regard me as a member of the family.

ELAINE. *(Thoughtfully)* A member of the family! *(She backs away. Hysterically laughing and sobbing)* Nothing! Nothing! No! *(And she turns and stumbles up the stairs. Exits.)*

(MOTOR Effect.)

CHESTER. *(Crosses* D.C. *Gazing after her in mild astonishment)* Hm—well—— *(Rushes to window.* CYRUS *comes in with a steaming tea-kettle. Starting violently)* Eh? What's that? Oh, it's you! *(And he laughs relievedly.)*

CYRUS. Yes, sir.

CHESTER. *(Crossing to him, to chair* L. *of table)* I presume I should introduce myself. My name is Chester Armstrong.

CYRUS. You don't have to tell me that, Mr. Armstrong.

CHESTER. I knew your wife when she was a girl. Perhaps she's mentioned me.

CYRUS. Yes, sir, she has. *(And he stands by a chair* R. *of table and stares at* CHESTER *with fascinated eyes.)*

CHESTER. She was an old sweetheart of mine. *(He chuckles at the memory.)*

CYRUS. Yes, sir, I know.

CHESTER. The only girl I ever cared for. You were the lucky man. You beat me out.

CYRUS. *(With a deep sigh)* Yes, sir.

CHESTER. *(Moves chair* L. *of table to* C.*)* I expect my life would have been a very different one if Jenny had married me.

CYRUS. *(Calculating gravely)* Well, now, I expect maybe it would.

CHESTER. *(Comfortably)* Hum—I'm looking forward to a good long visit with her. It will be pleasant to revive the past.

CYRUS. Yes, sir, I should think it might be.

CHESTER. And pleasant to be here. *(Crosses front to* L. *of sofa, looking around room)* In your delightful little home out of—er—out of the public eye.

CYRUS. Yes, sir. *(A pause)* My! My! Now it just don't seem possible.

CHESTER. *(Carelesssly)* What's that?

CYRUS. I did think your hair might be just a little gray by this time, but—my gracious! it certainly ain't. No, sir.

CHESTER. *(Startled. He puts his hand up to his hair)* My hair?

CYRUS. Yes, sir. And you ain't quite as tall as I expected you to be. *(Sits chair* R. *of table)* But I guess a feller does shrink a little with the years.

CHESTER. *(Crosses* C. *Standing up. Nervously)* What the devil do you mean?

CYRUS. You see, Jenny's told us all about you, sir—just how you look and everything.

CHESTER. The hell you say!

CYRUS. Yes, sir, even to your diamond ring——

CHESTER. *(Crosses to* L. *of table. A little desperately)* Are you trying to kid me, Bumpsted?

CYRUS. *(Aghast)* Oh, no, Mr. Armstrong, I wouldn't do anything like that. Shucks, I only mean—— *(He hesitates.)*

CHESTER. Yes? What?

CYRUS. *(Stammering)* I—well—she told us about

how rich you were,—and—and being president of a railroad or a bank or——

CHESTER. She told you that?

CYRUS. Yes, sir. Why, I'd of known you anywhere just from the things she said about you.

CHESTER. *(Suspiciously)* Is this on the level, Bumpsted?

CYRUS. My gracious, Mr. Armstrong, I don't know what you mean.

CHESTER. *(Almost threateningly)* You don't?

CYRUS. No, sir, I—*(With an effort)*—I—I just wanted to say I guess we can arrange things—somehow.

CHESTER. *(Vacantly)* Arrange? *(Then threateningly)* So you think you've got a chance to shake me down? *(He bangs his fist down on the table; crosses to* CYRUS*)* You're pretty slick! Well, what do you want? How much? *(He digs in his pocket, trembling with anxiety and rage, and hauls out a roll of bills.* CYRUS *gasps and backs away.)* Come on! Speak up! I'm asking you, how much?

CYRUS. I—I don't know what you mean.

CHESTER. How much to put me up here for a week and hold your tongue?

CYRUS. My stars! I don't want any money, Mr. Armstrong.

CHESTER. What?

CYRUS. Good gracious! No, sir.

CHESTER. Say, are you crazy? *(He puts the money back and stares at* CYRUS.*)*

CYRUS. No, sir.

CHESTER. What do you want? *(Crosses to* L. *of table.)*

CYRUS. I only want to do what's right and best for everybody.

CHESTER. *(Bitterly)* So you're one of that kind, eh? Well, by God—— *(And he takes a threatening step toward* CYRUS, *who backs away.)*

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CYRUS. If—if you'd just let me explain.

CHESTER. *(Viciously)* Explain? Yes, do that and be damn quick about it, too.

CYRUS. *(In great haste)* Yes, sir. You see, I thought if—if I was to go away, why—why, then everything would be all right.

CHESTER. What?

CYRUS. *(Rushing on)* Elly, that's my youngest girl, she's married now, married to a right nice boy, I think. They're going to get along. *(He pauses to catch his breath.)*

CHESTER. What the hell has all this got to do with me? *(Mops his brow.)*

CYRUS. I'm coming to that right now, Mr. Armstrong—yes, sir. I thought if I was to run away, you see, just disappear—then everything would be all right.

CHESTER. *(Shaking his head groggily)* My God!

CYRUS. *(Crosses* C., R. *of* CHESTER*)* I wouldn't mind—much. Shucks, no, sir, not a bit! I used to think I'd like to go and see some other places in the world. It—it's kind of broadening to a man. Of course I guess I'm just a little old to start out fresh again, but——

CHESTER. Say, what are you driving at?

CYRUS. *(Takes a deep breath)* Well, don't you see? Then—Jenny could get a—a divorce.

CHESTER. *(Blankly)* A divorce?

CYRUS. *(Very gravely)* Yes, sir.

CHESTER. But why, man, why?

CYRUS. *(Sadly)* Well, I guess you know the answer to that, Mr. Armstrong, as well as I do.

CHESTER. I? I know the answer?

CYRUS. Yes, sir. You see, she ain't scarcely talked about anything but you—for thirty years.

CHESTER. *What?*

CYRUS. Mind, I ain't blaming her. You see I ain't been what I should have been to her. I—well—I just

never got along right well—I guess. And I'll just be mighty glad to know she's got the things she's wanted all her life.

(READY Motor.)

CHESTER. *(Throws cigarette on carpet.* CYRUS *goes to pick it up—"Look here" stops him. He strides up to* CYRUS *and grips him by the arm. Emotion is close to mastering him. Harshly)* Look here! Listen to me, you! (CYRUS *winces and draws back a step)* Your wife doesn't care a whoop for me. She never did.

CYRUS. *(Faintly but doggedly)* Oh, yes, she does!

CHESTER. You're crazy—off your nut. *(He hesitates, then violently)* And I don't care a whoop for her.

CYRUS. You don't?

CHESTER. God, no!

CYRUS. But—but you said——

CHESTER. And that was thirty years ago.

CYRUS. *(Sighing)* I expect she has changed—some.

CHESTER. Changed? *(He chokes.)*

CYRUS. But maybe she'd change back to what she used to be.

CHESTER. Listen, now! *(He grips his arm)* Get this straight, my friend! I wouldn't marry her to save my soul from hell.

CYRUS. *(Gulping and drawing back)* Shucks! *(Sits chair* C.*)* Now that's too bad. I'm mighty sorry about that. (CHESTER *turns away and strides across the room to* L.C. *He takes out his handkerchief and blows his nose suspiciously and wipes the corners of his eyes.* CYRUS *shakes his head sadly and picks up the kettle and pours the water into the pan, murmuring to himself)* Yes, sir, now that's too bad—too bad.

CHESTER. *(Turns and studies him with tight-*

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pressed lips and calculating eyes, then abruptly strides back to him. Roughly) See here!

CYRUS. *(Gasping)* Yes, sir? *(He is about to plunge the bone-handled knives into the pan.)*

CHESTER. *(Huskily)* There's something that you've got a right to know.

(MOTOR Sound.)

CYRUS. Yes, sir?

CHESTER. When your wife knew me—— *(There is a sound of a motor in the road. He breaks off abruptly, listening)* Hush! What's that? *(His manner changes suddenly. Alertly, sharply)* Who would be coming here this time of night? Eh?

CYRUS. *(Dropping the knives into the pan)* My stars, Mr. Armstrong, I don't know!

CHESTER. No? *(The engine stops. He darts to the window and peeks out.)*

(MOTOR Stops.)

CYRUS. *(Following him)* After what's happened here to-night I wouldn't even guess. No, sir, I——

CHESTER. *(Turning back. Under his breath)* God! *(The furrows are deep between his eyes and he glances desperately this way and that.)*

CYRUS. *(Completing his speech)* —Don't guess anything'd surprise me much now.

(KNOCK.)

CHESTER. Look here! I—well, as a matter of fact—I—— *(There is a sturdy knock on the door. Helplessly and disgustedly)* Oh, hell! *(And he runs across the room, above sofa, to the parlor door.)*

CYRUS. *(Following at his heels by going front of sofa. Anxiously)* Yes, sir, I—— *(A heavy fist strikes the door again.)*

(KNOCK.)

CHESTER. *(Motioning him back frantically)* No, no! Beat it—go back! *(And he slips into the parlor, closing the door behind him.)*

(KNOCK.)

CYRUS. *(Backing away in complete confusion)* My gracious! What? What? *(Crosses to door* C. *The door is opened. A* MAN *stands in the entrance.* CYRUS *backs away, around above sofa to* L. *end of it)* My stars!

QUINN. Excuse me, please. I guess you're Mr. Bumpsted?

CYRUS. *(Faintly)* Yes, sir.

QUINN. I'm pleased to meet you, sir. My name is Quinn. *(He throws back his coat and displays a star.)* I'm from the detective bureau in the city. *(Crosses to kitchen door; looks in.)*

CYRUS. *(Gulping)* Yes, sir.

QUINN. *(Crosses* C.*)* I met up with a little feller out by the cemetery. I disremember what his name is now.

CYRUS. Sam Green?

QUINN. It might be that. A mean little cuss or I'm no judge.

CYRUS. *(Sadly)* I guess that's Sam.

QUINN. He showed me where you lived. In fact, my partner's got him out there in the car.

CYRUS. *(Nodding miserably)* Yes, sir.

QUINN. *(A step to* CYRUS. *Cheerfully)* Now, now. It won't take long to settle up our business.

CYRUS. *(Faltering)* I—I suppose you've come about the cider.

QUINN. Cider?

CYRUS. Yes, sir. *(A deep sigh)* I guess maybe it was—a little mite hard.

QUINN. It isn't cider that I'm after.

CYRUS. *(Immensely relieved)* No?

QUINN. No, sir. *(He shakes his head)* I'm looking for a middle-sized feller with black hair and a black moustache.

CYRUS. Why—why, you must mean Mr. Armstrong—Mr. Chester Armstrong.

(ELAINE *appears upon the stairs.)*

QUINN. Well, maybe so, but we know him best as Slippery Chet.

CYRUS. *(Gasping)* Slippery Chet?

QUINN. Gold-brick artist, confidence man, swindler, forger, and now he's peddling phony oil stock to widows and orphans.

CYRUS. *(Very faintly)* Shucks! Now I guess there's some mistake about all this.

QUINN. No chance, Mister. Why, he's spent half his life in jail. *(He looks about sharply)* The little feller said I'd find him here.

CYRUS. Yes, sir. He—he was here.

QUINN. Was here?

CYRUS. But—but he's gone.

QUINN. Gone? Gone where?

CYRUS. *(Choking)* I—I think he went right on.

(ELAINE *turns away quickly and goes softly up the stairs.)*

QUINN. How long ago?

CYRUS. Oh! Oh, not long!

QUINN. *(Disgustedly)* Damn the luck! *(Crosses a step toward kitchen, turns and starts for parlor)* You won't mind if I have a look around just to satisfy myself?

CYRUS. *(Protesting faintly)* I—well, now—— *(Staggering away from the table and barring his path)* No. No—please—you can't go in there, Mister.

QUINN. Why not?

CYRUS. *(Desperately)* I—I—— Well, you see, we—we've had a—a death in our family.

QUINN. *(Pause)* A death?

CYRUS. Yes, sir. And—and he's laid out—in there.

QUINN. Ah, now that's too bad! I won't bother you no more. A man could see with half an eye you never told a lie in all your life. It's a pity, though, you didn't keep him just a little longer.

CYRUS. *(Hanging tight to the end of table)* Yes, sir.

QUINN. There's ten thousand dollars' reward for him. *(Crosses to* C. *door, speaking as he goes)* I would 'a' split it with you. Well, g'night. *(He goes out* C. *and shuts the door.)*

(MOTOR Sound.)

CYRUS. *(Repeating groggily)* Ten thou—— Great snakes! Don't that beat everything! *(He totters to the parlor door and opens it a crack. Whispering)* Mr. Armstrong! It's all right, Mr. Armstrong. He's gone. *(He opens the door a little wider and raises his voice)* Mr. Armstrong! Oh, Mr. Armstrong! *(And now he flings it wide and stares into the room)* By gracious, he is gone, at that! Shucks! Well, I guess I didn't lie about it.

(JENNY *appears, ominous and majestic, at the foot of the stairs.)*

JENNY. *(Crossing above sofa to* L. *of sofa. In a terrifying tone)* Cyrus! What you doing in there?

CYRUS. *(Faintly)* Why—nothing, Jenny.

JENNY. You get those dishes done. *(She crosses toward the parlor, going above sofa.)*

(MOTOR Stops.)

CYRUS. *(Crossing front to* R. *of table)* Yes, I—I was just fixing to do that. *(He slips his hand into the pan and whisks out the bone-handled knives and hides them behind him.)*

JENNY. I'll talk to you later about—things.

CYRUS. *(Sadly)* Yes, Jenny. *(He drags the dishcloth through the water)* I—I'm mighty sorry about —everything.

JENNY. Humph! You'll be sorrier before I'm through.

CYRUS. I guess maybe that cider was just a little mite hard, Jenny.

JENNY. Ugh! *(She turns toward the parlor and calls softly)* Chet! Oh, Chet! *(She looks into the room)* Why—— *(And she turns back to* CYRUS*)* Where is Mr. Armstrong?

(ELAINE *appears on the stairs. She has changed her dress. She stands there listening.)*

CYRUS. *(Stammering badly)* Well, sir, now, he —he's gone, Jenny.

JENNY. Gone? Gone where?

CYRUS. I—I'll swear I don't exactly know. *(He scratches his head with a soapy forefinger)* You see he was in an awful hurry.

JENNY. Oh! *(She stares at him suspiciously)* Who was that came in a while ago?

CYRUS. *(Crossing to* R. *of sofa)* Who? *(For a moment he is stumped)* Oh, yes! That was a feller looking for him, Jenny.

JENNY. A telegram?

CYRUS. Yes, sir, that's it—that's just what it was —a telegram. That's why he had to go.

JENNY. Oh! *(She ponders)* It seems mighty sudden like.

CYRUS. *(Cheerfully)* That's right, Jenny—mighty sudden. But—well, you know these fellers in the oil business have to step right brisk sometimes.

JENNY. Humph! *(She stares at him for a long moment while he fumbles in the dish water)* Who left that window open?

CYRUS. Window? I—I don't know, Jenny. *(She marches into the parlor.)* Whew! *(Crosses to* C., *going above table to* L. *of chair* C. *He passes a soapy*

hand across his forehead and leans weakly against the table.)

ELAINE. *(Aghast, incredulous)* Father!

CYRUS. *(Gasping and starting)* My stars! Oh, it's you, Elly!

ELAINE. *(Running to his side and staring into his face. At his* R., *chair between them)* Father—what are you thinking of?

CYRUS. Why—why, nothing, Elly.

ELAINE. I was right there on the stairs when that man came in. I heard everything.

CYRUS. Shucks! Now that's too bad—yes, sir, too bad. *(He shakes his head sadly and cracks his finger joints)* I—I guess maybe Mr. Armstrong's in a little trouble, Elly.

ELAINE. *(Staggered) A—little—trouble?*

CYRUS. But I expect it's just some sort of a misunderstanding. Yes, sir, I guess that's what it is.

ELAINE. Are you trying to defend him?

CYRUS. *(Hastily)* No, no, I'm not, but—well, now, you know, Elly, there's a lot of right nice folks had trouble in—in the oil business.

ELAINE. Father! Look at me! Look me in the eye! *(He holds his head up, but his eyes stray from hers)* You see, you can't. *(She puts her hands upon his shoulders)* Why did you lie to her? Why didn't you tell her? *Why?*

CYRUS. Tell her? Tell her what?

ELAINE. The truth.

CYRUS. *(Aghast)* Hush! My stars! *(He glances over his shoulders at the parlor door)* What you thinking of, Elly? Why, we can't let your mother know. We can't ever let her know.

ELAINE. *What?*

CYRUS. She's thought about that feller all her life. He—he's just like God to her——

ELAINE. Father!

CYRUS. Why, it'd break her heart.

ELAINE. *(Sits on chair)* You—you—— Oh, God—— *(She cannot speak.)*

CYRUS. *(Patting her head)* There, there, Elly—

(JENNY *stalks into the room, and stands for a moment near door* L., *glaring at them.)*

JENNY. Oh!

(CYRUS *moves hastily toward the table.* ELAINE *raises her head. Her eyes are dry and her teeth are set. There is a menace in her face which a more observant person would respect.)*

CYRUS. *(Hastily picking up a dish)* 'Twon't be long now, Jenny.

JENNY. *(Witheringly)* Humph! *(Fixes pillow; crosses to fireplace. She turns to* ELAINE. *Harshly)* You go upstairs. I've got some things to settle with your father. *(*ELAINE *stiffens, but does not move.)* You hear what I say, Elaine? *(A pause.)*

CYRUS. *(Anxiously)* Elly! You—you better mind your mother.

ELAINE. *(To* JENNY *in a tense, unnatural voice)* All my life you've told me what to do. That's finished, Mother.

JENNY. *(Crosses to front of sofa)* It's finished when you leave my house.

ELAINE. My father's house.

CYRUS. *(Miserably)* Elly! Please!

JENNY. *(Furiously to* CYRUS*)* So you've turned my child against me, have you?

CYRUS. Now, now, Jenny, don't say that. Elly don't mean nothing.

JENNY. *(Through* CYRUS' *last speech)* It's not enough I slaved and struggled all these years so she

could have a chance to make some kind of future for herself—the kind I could have had.

CYRUS. They—they love each other, Jenny.

JENNY. *(Bitterly)* Oh! They do? And how long will that last—on nothing?

CYRUS. I—well—— *(He stands there wretchedly, cracking his finger joints.)*

JENNY. *(Crosses to* L. *of table)* You did it! You! You smashed your daughter's life tonight just like you broke those dishes. (ELAINE *laughs wildly; crosses to* L. *of chair* C.*)* You can laugh now. 'Twon't be so funny as the years roll by.

ELAINE. *(Pulls upstage chair to her* L.*)* Broken dishes! You've broken everything for us—our little hopes and joys—our home. You broke it. Myra and Mabel—you've broken them. You robbed them of their chances to be happy. You broke my father too. You've pulled him down and crushed him. You've browbeaten and belittled him. You told him he was weak. He's stronger than you, than any of us. He's had the strength to endure what would have killed an ordinary man.

JENNY. *(Beside herself)* Not another word from you.

ELAINE. *(Crosses to Mother)* Whatever's broken in this family, you broke—you!

JENNY. How dare you use that tone to me? Go! Go to your delivery clerk! *(Crosses* D.R.*)*

ELAINE. *(Through set teeth)* Wait! Don't worry about him. He'll get along all right——

JENNY. Delivery boy for Bascom's store! That's what he is—that's what he'll always be. You might have had the things I've wanted all my life. You might have had a man like Chester Armstrong.

ELAINE. *(Wildly)* Chester Armstrong!

CYRUS. *(Crossing around above table to* ELAINE'S R., *alarmed)* Elly!

ELAINE. *(Crossing to* L. *of table)* We're through with Chester Armtsrong—forever—do you hear? You'll never name him in your life again—out loud. (CYRUS *crosses to* R. *of chair* C.)

JENNY. Be careful what you say!

ELAINE. Listen to me! *(She takes a deep breath and never glances at her father)* My father lied to you. *(Exultantly)* Yes, he lied—and—and no finer thing was ever done.

JENNY. What?

ELAINE. He lied for you—to save your pride. You should be crawling to him on your knees for that! (CYRUS *moves a step upstage.)* No one came here with a telegram. There was no telegram. *(A pause)* But someone did come—someone for Chester Armstrong, too. (CYRUS *groans and clings weakly to a chair.)*

JENNY. *(A little breathlessly)* Go on!

ELAINE. That's why he's gone—gone through the parlor window.

JENNY. *(Gasping)* What?

ELAINE. Police! (JENNY *keeps eyes on* ELAINE) Do you understand? Police!

JENNY. *(Stupidly)* Police? For what?

ELAINE. For him—a common crook—a thief.

JENNY. No!

ELAINE. A confidence man, a swindler, and a forger!

JENNY. *(Backing away and clutching at her throat)* No! No!

ELAINE. Yes, it's the truth! Half his life he's been in jail. That's what you could have had—what your life might have been.

JENNY. *(Looks at* CYRUS. *Wretchedly he bows his head. Thickly)* Oh! Oh! Oh! *(And she sinks into a chair* R. *of table, and covers her face with her hands.* ELAINE *crosses* D.R., *watching her.)*

CYRUS. I—I'm mighty sorry, Jenny. *(He sighs.* ELAINE *slowly turns front* R., *hand on table.)* Shucks! I feel just like someone had died.

ELAINE. *(Passionately)* Someone has, Father. Thank God! Thank God!

CYRUS. Elly!

ELAINE. *(Crossing to Father's* R.*)* Oh, Father! Don't you see?

CYRUS. See what?

ELAINE. This shadow that's been hanging over you so long was just a shadow after all. This idol with its dirty, muddy feet! I knew it was a fake some way. I knew. I knew.

CYRUS. *(Vaguely)* Well, now, there may be something in that, Elly. Doggone! I never thought of it that way before. *(He ponders this amazing idea.)*

ELAINE. A fake! A lie! A common thief! (JENNY *sobs.)*

CYRUS. Elly! Elly!

ELAINE. Oh, don't you see? And that's the thing you've lived with all these years—the stone that's hung around your neck and pulled you down, and held you down. Father!

CYRUS. *(Taking a deep breath)* Yes, Elly, I—I see.

ELAINE. Look at me, Father—straight in the eye. *(He does.)* You're not afraid of anything now. You never will be afraid of anything again.

CYRUS. *(Doubtfully)* Well, now, Elly——

ELAINE. You're the head of this house, Father, and of this family, too—from this day on.

CYRUS. *(Crosses her)* I see what you mean, Elly —yes, sir, I do. *(And he turns and walks across the room to* D.R.C., *seeming almost to grow and to expand before your eyes)* Yes, sir, there's something in those things you said. Hum—I was about to think of 'em myself. *(He trips on a dragging end of the apron)* Shucks! *(And he jerks it off and*

drops it carelessly beside the table as if he were done with it for good. Looks at JENNY *to see effect on her. He crosses* D.R.*)*

ELAINE. *(Smiling delightedly into his eyes. She hesitates a moment, then turns to her mother; crossing above table to mother* L., *who is crying silently into her handkerchief. Gently)* Mother! I'm going away to-night with—with my husband. You needn't worry about us. We're going to get along all right. And some day you'll be proud of Bill. (JENNY *covers her eyes and sobs.* ELAINE *hesitates, half puts out her hand. She sighs and shakes her head)* I'm sorry, Mother. *(She turns away and goes quickly up the stairs.* CYRUS *stands near the table, regarding* JENNY *with a troubled and sympathetic expression. At length he crosses to her side.)*

CYRUS. *(Very gently)* Now, now, Jenny, you mustn't cry like that. *(Her sobs redouble. He puts his hand on her shoulder)* Shucks, that feller could fool anyone, even the President of the United States, I bet. Why, he even liked to fool me, Jenny—— *(He pats her shoulder)* My gracious, yes! What with fine clothes and city ways and—and his black curly hair——

JENNY. *(Through her sobs)* It's a wig.

CYRUS. Shucks—don't that beat everything?

JENNY. His hair was red. Folks used to call him "Brick."

CYRUS. *(Crossing to* R. *of* JENNY *by going around above table)* Brick? But, Jenny, you said——

JENNY. I—I made it up—about his hair. *(She gulps.)*

CYRUS. Oh, you did! *(He nods slowly to himself and stares at her)* Well, hair ain't everything. A man like that with diamond rings and money——

JENNY. He—he didn't have a diamond ring. He didn't have anything.

CYRUS. *(Swallowing hard)* What's that?

JENNY. He was the butcher boy. He used to bring our meat. *(Still sobbing)* Father wouldn't have him in the house. I really didn't care for him myself until he went away, and then—— *(A pause.)*

CYRUS. *(Gently)* Yes, Jenny?

JENNY. I thought perhaps he'd got along. I used to think about it all so much—and then I just believed he had.

CYRUS. Yes, I see.

JENNY. He came to stand for all the things I'd wanted all my life.

CYRUS. I guess I understand that, Jenny.

JENNY. *(Mopping her eyes)* I wanted you to get along and—and to save our girls from making a mistake.

CYRUS. Now don't you worry, Jenny. You've only tried to do the best you could for all of us. *(He pats her shoulder. Gently)* We ain't ever going to speak about this thing again; no, sir, not ever—— *(Crossing* C. *She is quite too overcome for speech, with her handkerchief held to her eyes.)* Shucks! Now don't that beat everything. Well—well—well— (BILL *comes* C. *into the room. He has a suitcase in his hand.)* Well, if there ain't Bill. Come in, Bill. *(Crossing* R.*)* Make yourself at home. *(And he waves a careless, genial hand.)*

(WARN Curtain.)

BILL. *(Somewhat doubtfully)* Yes, sir. I—I just came for Elaine.

CYRUS. Come any time, Bill. This house is home to Elly's husband. *(Crosses to sofa; sits.)*

BILL. Yes, sir—I will. (BILL's *jaw drops.* CYRUS *crosses legs.)*

ELAINE. *(In hat and coat has come down the stairs)* I'm ready, Bill. *(She stays on landing.)*

*(*MYRA, *in a pink negligee, appears on the stairs, and close behind her,* MABEL *in a hideous flannel dressing gown.)*

MYRA. *(Dazedly)* Mother! *(Stares at the littered table)* Why—why, the dishes aren't even done!

*(*JENNY *stands up hastily and furtively wipes her eyes; and she picks up the discarded apron and puts it on.* MYRA *gazes open-mouthed from her father to her mother.)*

CYRUS. *(With a great air of careless good-humor)* Now, now, there's no hurry about those dishes. No, siree, not a bit. *(*BILL *places cases on floor. They all turn and stare at him except* JENNY, *who is crying softly and gathering up the silver.)* Shucks! What's a little time more or less? 'Tain't hardly nothing. *(*ELAINE *crosses past* BILL *to back of sofa, behind* L. *of father. He takes out a cigar and squints at the band)* Flor de Troc-a-der-o— Hum—I bet that's a good cigar.

MABEL *and* MYRA. *(In breathless unison)* Father!

CYRUS. *(Continuing mellowly)* Why, just to-night at our Lodge, I was talking to J. G. Smedley, President First National Bank—yes, sir—I was talking to him about that very thing. "J. G.," I says, "J. G., *(He cocks his head and strokes his chin)* Time ain't much. *(Lights cigar)* No, sir, it really ain't. *(Throws match away. A gasp from the girls.)* Not when you've got something pleasant to look forward to." *(He tucks his thumbs in the armholes of his vest and chuckles delightedly.)*

ELAINE. *(Leaning over the back of his chair. Softly and tenderly)* You're wonderful, Father—just wonderful. *(She presses a kiss upon his head.)*

CYRUS. Shucks!

(MABEL *yawns, turns and goes upstairs.* ELAINE *crosses to* BILL; *they gather luggage and* JENNY *does the dishes—as—)*

CURTAIN

PUBLICITY THROUGH YOUR LOCAL PAPERS

The press can be an immense help in giving publicity to your productions. In the belief that the best reviews from the New York and other large papers are always interesting to local audiences, and in order to assist you, we have printed below several excerpts from those reviews.

To these we have also added a number of suggested press notes which may be used either as they stand or changed to suit your own ideas and submitted to the local press.

"BROKEN DISHES"

"Clean, wholesome, charming little comedy packed with laughs. Welcome addition to the ranks of current successes. Donald Meek superb."—Coleman, *Mirror.*

"Kept its audience in a constant glow of good humor."—*News.*

"Unquestionable success. Sympathetic audience almost broke into cheers. Donald Meek's characterization is an extraordinary portrait."—Ruhl, *Herald-Tribune.*

"He who cannot laugh at this play had better see

his physician. Worth seeing. Deserves to be popular. A heart-warming comedy in which laughter and pathos follow in rapid succession. Donald Meek just lives the part."—Rathbun, *Sun*.

"Martin Flavin in pleasantly holiday mood. Hugely diverting capers."—*Times*.

"Martin Flavin has scored another popular success. Leaves you with a grin on your face as you cling to the subway strap, bound for home. Can't help being attracted to this intensely human production."—*Graphic*.

"For one jaded by jazz, songs and music, there's a worth-while change offered at the Ritz Theater. And judging from its reception, the players will be jolly well tired of reading their lines before another offering gets a chance in the house in 48th Street, just west of Broadway. Donald Meek perfection himself. Received with fervor."—*Evening World*.

"Audience received play with rapture, roaring for more. Hilarious and touching. Scene in second act roused the audience to something like hysterical enthusiasm."—Waldorf, *Post*.

"Should be seen at all costs as one of the really touching comedies of the season. Ingratiating little play with shrewd, observant touches in incident and dialogue."—Smith, *World*.

"Recommended with no reservations whatever. Well written and splendidly acted mingling of laughter and tears. Marked with a little gold star as delightful, mighty fine entertainment."—*Journal*.

"One of the pleasantest experiences in the theater this autumn. The pathetic charm of the wedding scene makes it one of the most effective and affecting scenes on the New York stage to-day. Skillfully staged by Marion Gering. I can do nothing but recommend 'Broken Dishes' for your early attention. It is a play that I am sure you will like as much as I

did—and I have already seen it twice."—Field, *Brooklyn Times.*

PRESS MATTER—BROKEN DISHES

Henpecked husbands have existed since the institution of marriage was invented, and probably before, and will exist as long as man likes to live with woman. They are a perpetual source of amusement to everyone but themselves, and at the Ritz Theater, Manhattan, Martin Flavin, author of the "Criminal Code," one of the hits of the season, uses one as a hero, a very timid one, in his new play, "Broken Dishes."

Cyrus Bumpsted is the name of the long-suffering husband, and he becomes a character with whom we can sympathize as readily as laugh at. For many years Bumpsted has smarted under the stinging lash of his wife's tongue, who is a perfect example of a virago. Most men would have rebelled during the first year of marriage, but being essentially an easy-going creature, willing to undergo a mild form of torture as long as he is not actually engaged in conflict, he has borne the vicissitudes of life with a shrew until he has reached the age when he is endowed with three daughters, one of whom desires to be married.

At this point, the well-known worm turns. He himself is able to stand the persecution, serious and petty, of his termagant wife, but when it comes to his favorite daughter falling under the yoke, he rebels. While Mrs. Bumpsted is out making whoopee at the movies with the other two girls, Cyrus, though he is aware to the bottom of his quaking soul that he will catch perdition when she returns, marries off his favorite to the man she loves, his wife's special anathema.

While the father and the newly married daughter are awaiting the coming of the storm in fear and trembling, a stranger arrives. This stranger, it seems, is the man Mrs. Bumpsted might have married, which fact she uses as a strangle-hold on poor Cyrus, for she thinks this might-have-been is a tremendously wealthy individual. As a matter of fact he is a crook, and the rebellion in "Broken Dishes" turns out successfully.

PRESS MATTER—BROKEN DISHES

Curiously enough it was in a cemetery in France where the idea came to Martin Flavin to write that most charming of comedies entitled "Broken Dishes" which will be presented at Theater on by Players.

We will let Mr. Flavin speak for himself.

"Another dismal, dreary, rainy day. Myself bereft of an idea—bereft is not the word—rather say sterile—empty. I got on the Metro in the afternoon and journeyed to Pere la Chaise, that grand old cemetery with its close-packed tombs and graves. The earth fairly bulges with the famous men who lie beneath it. Men who were bitter enemies in life lie side by side.

"This is an amusing idea—gorgeously satirical—delightful. It captivates me. I wander there among the graves in the drizzling rain. There is something in this—something. I sit down on a tomb and try to think of nothing. Sometimes things come that way. And so it comes, this play called 'Broken Dishes.'

"There is a line in it, 'Time puts halos around a lot of second-rate things.' It may have come from that or from an inscription on a monument—from both or something else. At all events it came, almost complete and fully formed within an hour. I sat

there on the tomb, drenched in the rain. It grew dark. The gendarmes came to put me out so they could lock the gates."

After seeing the presentation of "Broken Dishes" by the Players, we feel sure that our local playgoers will wish Mr. Flavin many rainy days in the cemeteries of France.

PRESS MATTER—BROKEN DISHES

When the Players present Martin Flavin's delightfully wholesome comedy entitled "Broken Dishes" at Theater, on they will introduce to the theatergoers of this city two of the most lovable characters known to the drama, viz.: Cyrus Bumpsted and his daughter Elaine.

Cyrus is an example of monumental patience and good-nature. In the midst of the continual bickerings of his wife and elder daughters, his temper remains unruffled. He is one of those men whose desire for peace and willingness to do good to others has been mistaken for weakness by all excepting his loving little daughter Elaine.

If the object of a play is to teach a lesson as well as to entertain, here is a lesson in patience and kindness that stands out like a beacon, and it is no more than fair that such a noble character should be rewarded by happiness in the end.

The character of Chester, whom Mrs. Bumpsted has built up in her mind as a long-lost love who left her to become rich, is a fabulous figure in the play. Chester turns out to be all sorts of a scamp who has spent much of his time in jail. When Cyrus tries to conceal the bitter truth from his wife he rises to the majestic.

Life is the better for such men as Cyrus, and we can positively guarantee that all those who see

"Broken Dishes" will feel better for an evening well spent amidst laughter, tears, romance and love.

PRESS MATTER—BROKEN DISHES

On the Players will present Martin Flavin's delightful comedy entitled "Broken Dishes" at Theater.

This wonderfully successful play tells the story of the Bumpsted family. For thirty years Mrs. Bumpsted has nagged her husband. In and out of season she barks at him her disappointment that she married a weakling and a failure instead of the grand young man named Chester whom she had loved, but who went away to the big city and became rich. Cyrus decides to help his younger daughter, Elaine, to get married to a grocer's boy that she may escape the barrage of sour sniffs that Mrs. Bumpsted steadily lays down. He cheerfully undertakes to wash the supper dishes when Mrs. Bumpsted and the two elder daughters depart for an evening at the movies. First he goes to a lodge meeting, however, and comes home beaming with the spirit of the occasion. He keeps silent when a sheriff comes hunting for Chester the Glorious, who has happened along and is in hiding. Chester turns out to be a crooked oil promoter, a gold-brick purveyor, and an all-round rascal who has spent much of his life in jail. "It would break Jenny's heart to find that out," Cyrus says, in explaining why he made no effort to get the ten thousand dollars' reward that would have been his had he informed on Chester. Elaine marries the grocer's boy and the play ends with an indication of future peace for Cyrus.

Cyrus existed before the play began and he goes on triumphantly after it is over. He is a direct descendant of "my Uncle Toby" in "Tristram Shandy."

LIGHT CUES

ACT I

No. 1
On at rise:
Firelight.
Spots R. off stage.
1—2 Baby spots.
Right foots.
3—7—8—10—10A and R. X-ray.
No. 2:
On:
Chandelier.
Left X-ray; 4—5—6—9—1A.
Left brackets and foots.
No 3:
Start L. foots and 1000 watt down.
No. 4:
Out:
Right bracket and chandelier.
Spots 3—7—8—10—10A.
X-Ray and R. foots
No. 4:
On:
Spots 1—2 and L. foots.

ACT II

No. 5:
On:
3—7—8—10—10A.

Down R. brackets.
Right X-ray spots.
4—5—6—9—10.
Chandelier.

Up:
Right foots.
Left 1000 watt.
Left foots.

No. 6:
Light in parlor on.

ELECTRICAL PLOT

Firelight—outside—R. strip—L. strip.

On R. bracket—
3—7—8—10—10A.—R. X-ray—R. foots.

Chandelier.
Left X-ray—1A—4—5—6—9.

Left bracket.
Left and C. foots and stan spots.

When Lights Out—Act I:
Right bracket.
3—7—8—10—10A—R. X-ray and R. foots.

Chandelier.
1A—4—5—6—9—L. X-ray—C. foots.

When Lights on—Act II.
On same way.

Left foots—stan spot on dimmer (when lights out Act I.).

PROPERTY PLOT

Alcove door D.R.—picture of girl with lamb.
Calendar under D.R. bracket.
One small buffet L. of door D.R.
Pitcher and bowl on R. lower shelf.
On top—salt and pepper shaker, dishes, bowl of fruit, large pitcher.
Candlestick and tray—yellow candles.
Small chest under buffet.
Sea picture on wall of stairs.
Picture of baby and dog over door C.
Oval picture over organ.
On Organ: Books, vase, newspapers and magazine.
Book of music, front, on organ.

On mantel: Candlesticks, 2 small pictures, clock.
Statue of woman on clock.
Picture of stags over mantel.
Practical fire—fender, tongs and shovel, fire-box.

Whatnot U.L. corner.
From bottom up—Books, plate, bottle, shell, vase.

Blue pillow R. of sofa.
Over door D.L.—picture.
Scratched chair L. of table.
Downstage of table chair angled—from Mabel to Elly.
Curtains for window—and small window.
Window shade—also for small window.

Dining room table.
Samplers and family chromos.
Horrible pieces of painted china.
Morris chair.
Sofa—1 small pillow, same color, on sofa.
Melodeon.
Large clock for mantel (clock must be practical).
Whatnot with hideous rocks and shells on it.
Flowered carpet worn thin.
Five chairs from golden period of the early 90's (2 arm—3 plain).
Usual rustic gimcracks.
Bench for melodeon.
Fireplace equipment and practical fire in fireplace.
Carpet for the stairs.
Dining room table set for *five* people for evening meal.
Bone-handled knives.
Cutlery.
Dishes.
Napkins.
Glasses.
Pot of tea.
Cups.
Saucers.
China.
Remains of meal on plates.
One plate piled with food untouched.
Plate of biscuits—near Myra.
Plate of butter—near Elaine.
Salt.
Pepper.
Sugar.
Cream.
Sliced lemon on plate.
Tablecloth.
Strawberry preserves on dish near Elly.
Jug of cider—filled.

Photograph of one of the family on mantel.
Three wall brackets.
Chandelier.
Oilcloth under tablecloth.
Elain's cup full.
Myra's cup full.
Father's cup near Mother.
Father's plate full.
Food on Mabel's plate.
Scraps only on others.
Blanket under oilcloth.
Right brackets *on*.
Chandelier and L. brackets *off*.

OFF STAGE PROPERTIES AND NOISES

ACT I

Black small purse for change—Jenny, off R.
A dish of canned peaches—off R.
A plate of cake—off R.
Cup of hot tea (must steam) off R.
Plate of hot biscuits—off R. on small plate.
Bib apron—off R.—large—woman's—to fit Mother.
Bib apron with a rip in it—off R. Same as other one.
Dishpan with hot water—off R.
Dishcloth—off R.
Dishtowels—off R.
Effect of door slam R.

ACT II

Place chair R. of table D.S. a foot.
Place 2 cups on table downstage.
Clean cloth D.S.—Move cloth on R. further C.
Crash of vase breaking—off L.
Fragments of a large and hideous china vase—off L.
Teakettle filled with hot water—off R.

Door C. and L. closed.
Torn apron—off R.

ACT III

Slab of cake—Mabel, off R.
Gingham apron for Cyrus—on chair R. of table.
Kettle of hot water—Cyrus—off R.
Sound of a motor car—off R.
Suitcase—Bill—off C.
Remove women's clothes from stage.

Wet towel—Elaine.
Wet towel on Cyrus' head.

Organ stool away L. from organ a bit.

HAND PROPERTIES

ACT I

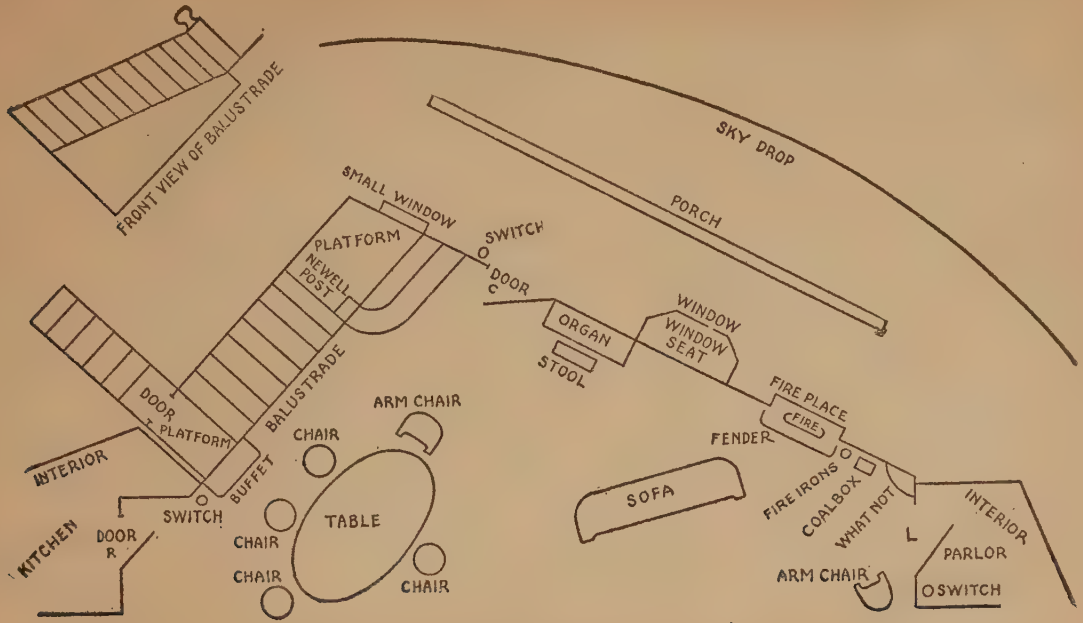
Clock set 6:33.
Ring box with small diamond ring in it—Bill.
Marriage license—Bill.

ACT II

Place chair R. of table D.S. a foot.
2 cups on table downstage end—Cloth further C. from R.
Clock striking nine—clock set for *nine* o'clock.
Cigars—wrapped—Bill.
Cigars, same brands as Cyrus has—Sam Green.
Pocket matches—Sam.
Pocket matches—Cyrus.
Diamond ring—Chester.
Episcopalian prayer book—Stump.
Doors C. and L. closed.

ACT III

Remove women's clothes from stage.
Roll of yellow money bills—Chester.
Cigars—Chester—matches.
Detective badge—Quinn.
Cigarettes—Chester.
Move cider and dishes away from D.S. end.
Old letters for Chester.
Organ stool away to L. from organ a bit.



SCENE DESIGN

"BROKEN DISHES"

TWEEDLES

Comedy in 3 acts, by Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson. 5 males, 4 females. 1 interior. Costumes, modern. Plays 2½ hours.

Julian, scion of the blue-blooded Castleburys, falls in love with Winsora Tweedle, daughter of the oldest family in a Maine village. The Tweedles esteem the name because it has been rooted in the community for 200 years, and they look down on "summer people" with the vigor that only "summer boarder" communities know.

The Castleburys are aghast at the possibility of a match, and call on the Tweedles to urge how impossible such an alliance would be. Mr. Castlebury laboriously explains the barrier of social caste, and the elder Tweedle takes it that these unimportant summer folk are terrified at the social eminence of the Tweedles.

Tweedle generously agrees to co-operate with the Castleburys to prevent the match. But Winsora brings her father to realize that in reality the Castleburys look upon them as inferiors. The old man is infuriated, and threatens vengeance, but is checkmated when Julian unearths a number of family skeletons and argues that father isn't a Tweedle, since the blood has been so diluted that little remains. Also, Winsora takes the matter into her own hands and outfaces the old man. So the youngsters go forth triumphant. "Tweedles" is Booth Tarkington at his best. **(Royalty, twenty-five dollars.)** **Price, 75 Cents.**

JUST SUPPOSE

A whimsical comedy in 3 acts, by A. E. Thomas, author of "Her Husband's Wife," "Come Out of the Kitchen," etc. 6 males, 2 females. 1 interior, 1 exterior. Costumes, modern. Plays 2¼ hours.

It was rumored that during his last visit the Prince of Wales appeared for a brief spell under an assumed name somewhere in Virginia. It is on this story that A. E. Thomas based "Just Suppose." The theme is handled in an original manner. Linda Lee Stafford meets one George Shipley (in reality is the Prince of Wales). It is a case of love at first sight, but, alas, princes cannot select their mates and thereby hangs a tale which Mr. Thomas has woven with infinite charm. The atmosphere of the South with its chivalry dominates the story, touching in its sentiment and lightened here and there with delightful comedy. "Just Suppose" scored a big hit at the Henry Miller Theatre, New York, with Patricia Collinge. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.)

Price, 75 Cents.

SAMUEL FRENCH, 25 West 45th Street, New York City

New and Explicit Descriptive Catalogue Mailed Free on Request

COME OUT OF THE KITCHEN

A charming comedy in 3 acts. Adapted by A. E. Thomas from the story of the same name by Alice Duer Miller. 6 males, 5 females. 3 interior scenes. Costumes, modern. Plays 2½ hours.

The story of "Come Out of the Kitchen" is written around a Virginia family of the old aristocracy, by the name of Daingerfield, who, finding themselves temporarily embarrassed, decide to rent their magnificent home to a rich Yankee. One of the conditions of the lease by the well-to-do New Englander stipulates that a competent staff of white servants should be engaged for his sojourn at the stately home. This servant question presents practically insurmountable difficulties, and one of the daughters of the family conceives the mad-cap idea that she, her sister and their two brothers shall act as the domestic staff for the wealthy Yankee. Olivia Daingerfield, who is the ringleader in the merry scheme, adopts the cognomen of Jane Allen, and elects to preside over the destinies of the kitchen. Her sister, Elizabeth, is appointed housemaid. Her elder brother, Paul, is the butler, and Charley, the youngest of the group, is appointed to the position of bootboy. When Burton Crane arrives from the North, accompanied by Mrs. Faulkner, her daughter, and Crane's attorney, Tucker, they find the staff of servants to possess so many methods of behavior out of the ordinary that amusing complications begin to arise immediately. Olivia's charm and beauty impress Crane above everything else, and the merry story continues through a maze of delightful incidents until the real identity of the heroine is finally disclosed. But not until Crane has professed his love for his charming cook, and the play ends with the brightest prospects of happiness for these two young people. "Come Out of the Kitchen," with Ruth Chatterton in the leading rôle, made a notable success on its production by Henry Miller at the Cohan Theatre, New York. It was also a great success at the Strand Theatre, London. A most ingenious and entertaining comedy, and we strongly recommend it for amateur production. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) Price, 75 Cents.

GOING SOME

Play in 4 acts. By Paul Armstrong and Rex Beach. 12 males, 4 females. 2 exteriors, 1 interior. Costumes, modern and cowboy. Plays a full evening.

Described by the authors as the "chronicle of a certain lot of college men and girls, with a tragic strain of phonograph and cowboys." A rollicking good story, full of action, atmosphere, comedy and drama, redolent of the adventurous spirit of youth. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) Price, 75 Cents.

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